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## DETACHED LINKS.





# DETACHED LINKS:

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS AND DISCOURSES OF

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE CITY TEMPLE, HOLBORN VIADUCT, LONDON.

AUTHOR OF 'ECCE DEUS;' 'SPRINGDALE ABBEY;' 'AD CLERUM;' 'RAVEN DIGBY;' 'A  
HOMILETIC ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL BY MATTHEW,' ETC. ETC.

COMPILED BY

REV. JOSEPH LUCAS,

LONDON.



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TO THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

WORSHIPPING IN

*The City Temple*

THIS VOLUME OF

EXTRACTS FROM THE SERMONS AND WRITINGS OF THEIR PASTOR

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY THE

COMPILER AND EDITOR.



## PREFACE.

THE "City Temple" has already become a centre of attraction in the Metropolis, the Thursday noon-day service constituting one of its most striking features. This service, originated by Dr Parker three years since, still retains its power of attraction and usefulness. To induce so many men of business to close their ledgers, to forget their business schemes, and to throng the sanctuary at the unusual hour of noon, manifestly requires a preacher of no ordinary ability; and to maintain such services from year to year in all their freshness and vigour indicates that such preacher is as exhaustless in his resources as he is varied in his power. It is chiefly to the sermons preached on these occasions that the public must consider themselves indebted for the contents of this volume; and the compiler sincerely hopes that the volume thus presented may find a place on the shelf of every Christian library, to be the herald only of the many truly able volumes from which these extracts are culled. Dr Parker holds a foremost place amongst the leaders of nonconformity; but whilst firm in his declaration of, and adherence to, his own "principles," he is ever ready, as thousands of his admirers can testify, to extend his sympathy and help to Christians of all denominations. His ability is questioned by none. The author of "Ecce Deus" and "A Homiletical Analysis of the New Testa-

## PREFACE.

ment" must ever be acknowledged the possessor of a mind strictly logical—of consummate homiletic power—and of keen insight into men and things. His originality of thought and expression—his thorough honesty and manliness—his contempt for all that is mean, and his sympathy for everything that has in it aught of candour and nobility—and his supreme devotion to the one great work of his life, the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, are the chief features of his ministry and the true secret of his success.

Dr Parker must be *heard* to be thoroughly appreciated. It is impossible to transfer to the printed page the tone, gesture, glance, and fire of the preacher—indeed, to use an expression which we remember once to have fallen from the lips of our author, "It is impossible to publish a thunder-storm."

Our thanks are due to Dr Parker for the kindly manner in which he consented to the publication of the present volume of "Detached Links." May his ministry in this great city, so auspiciously begun, be a prolonged one, and may the "City Temple," now in course of erection, become a place of preparation to multitudes for that *City* which hath foundations, and that *Temple* not made with hands.

JOSEPH LUCAS.

*Claremont House, Victoria Park,  
February, 1873.*

## DETACHED LINKS.

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### 1. Hidden Faults Revealed.

HERE is a large brilliant diamond. You look at the stone, and it pleases you by its wondrous whiteness and lustre. You admire it, you praise it very highly. You say, "This stone is without fault of any kind—a most beautiful and precious gem." The lapidary places in your hand a magnifying glass of great power, and bids you look at the centre of the stone. You look. The lapidary inquires what you see, and you reply, "Why, there is a black spot at its very centre! I did not see that without the glass. To the naked eye the stone looked perfectly white—entirely without flaw or fault; and yet now that I look at the stone through the glass, why I wonder that I could not have seen so great a speck as that!" The lapidary says the naked eye cannot receive it, neither can it know it, because it is microscopically discerned. And nobody arises to contest the reasoning of the lapidary: no man ventures to say to him, "Sir, you have introduced a most painful mystery into human thought and human inquiry." Such people are rather glad that a medium has been supplied by which the most hidden fault can be brought to light.

### 2. The Crooked Way Straightened.

A CHILD might say to a geographer "You talk about the earth being round! Look on this great crag; look on that deep dell; look on yonder great mountain, and the valley at its feet, and yet, you talk about the earth being round."



The geographer would have an instant answer for the child ; his view is comprehensive ; he does not look at the surface of the world in mere detail ; he does not deal with inches, and feet, and yards ; he sees a larger world than the child has had time to grasp. He explains what he means by the expression, "The earth is a globe," and justifies his strange statement. And so it is with God's wonderful dealings towards us : there are great rocks and barren deserts, deep, dank, dark pits, and defiles, and glens, and dells, rugged places that we cannot smooth over at all, and yet when He comes to say to us at the end of the journey, "Now look back ; there is the way that I have brought you," we shall be enabled to say, "Thou hast gone before us, and made our way straight."

### 3. The Motherliness of God.

WHEN the mother goes before her child that is taking its first little journey across the room, to move this chair and that stool, and to clear the course for the little traveller, is she haughtily saying, "I am your head ; I am greater, and older, and better than you ?" She never thought of saying anything of the kind : the very fact of her going before, the apparent act of priority and superiority, comes out of her love, and gentleness, and care, lest one of the steps of her child should slide. So let us not always think of God as exhibiting proofs of royalty and supremacy, or as throwing His shadow upon us to teach us our littleness, but rather think of Him going before us that he may remove the mountains and gather up the rough stones, and make plain places for our feet ; and so, out of what some regard as a great overshadowing and chilling dominion, let us get the better idea of a patient, watchful, inexpressible tenderness.

### 4. Things which Money cannot Buy.

WITH money you can buy the canvas and the oil, but not the artistic eye which interprets and appreciates the picture ;

you can buy the poem, but the living and inspiring poetry is not for sale; you can rent the garden, but cannot bribe the flowers to whisper their tender messages. After all, it is but a very little way that money can go; it can do nearly everything in the market-place or among the dust of cities, but what do the angels know of your currency, your bills of exchange, your promissory notes, and your intricate conveyancing of estates? Not one of the great redemptions of life can be wrought out with money: death takes no bribe; the grave will not sell its victories for gold; you may buy the Bible, but you cannot buy the Holy Ghost; you may pay for the masonry, but no money can put you in possession of the Spirit of the altar.

### 5. Lofty Ideals.

OUR safety is in having lofty ideals, and in constant labour to secure their realization. Let the getting of money be a man's ideal, and he will of necessity grow towards the dust; let a man hunger and thirst after the kingdom of God, and he will grow into strength and enjoy an unspeakable peace.

### 6. Journeying Onward—How?

MAN must go. It is not a question of whether we will go or not go, that is determined for us—we *must* go. Every man is accomplishing a journey, going through a process. No man is standing still. The infant is going on towards youth; youth is advancing towards the stature and strength of manhood; and man, in the summer of his prosperity and honour, is going on towards the sere leaf, and towards a land of darkness as darkness itself. Men must go on, then. The only question is—*How?* Man may go, either with God or without Him.

### 7. Showers of Blessing.

SEE the thirsty fields; to-day cracked, crumbling into sand, cattle complaining, sheep bleating for water and for nourish-

ment. There are great gaps in the earth. The sun has been too fierce upon this little handful of dust we call our land. Wait. There is a cloud about the size of a man's hand to be seen in the distant sky: it increases, spreads, darkens, deepens, breaks—and rich rains fall down, and the thirsty place is satisfied, and hastens to express its thanks in bringing forth abundantly, that there may be food for man and beast. O Thou who art compared unto water, pour out Thyself upon us, lest Thine inheritance be scorched and burnt up, and there be no content, nor plenty, nor prosperity in our Churches.

#### 8. True Greatness.

A MAN builds a bridge, and he is a great man; another man puts up a cathedral, and he too is a great man. I won't take away one iota from the just fame and honour of such men. We can't do without them. We should be poor if we hadn't such men amongst us. They are the glory of civilization. But is it nothing to give a man an idea that shall change his life? to tame the tiger heart and make it gentle as a lamb's? to put into man thoughts, and stir in him impulses, that shall heal him in his sorrows, chasten him in his joys, interpret to him the darkest problems of his life, and hold a light over his way when he passes into the wonderful dark Unknown?

#### 9. Science of Numbers

THE highest profits in life cannot be set down in figures. The science of numbers is the science of mistakes when applied to the soul.

#### 10. Principles *v.* Fixed Rules.

YOU cannot conduct life in its highest phases and its intensest desires by any set of maxims. You can only control and elevate life by having principles which can shrink and expand,—adapt themselves when the man's

moral temperature rises, when his strength rises, and suit themselves to all the varying phases and wants of his life. Tell Hannah that she ought not pray for what God has not seen fit to give her, and she scorns your formal piety and your tabulated counsels. Why? She is not in a mood to receive that kind of instruction; there is a hunger in her heart; through her own love she sees far into the love of God; and by the eagerness of her desire she goes far away, with bleeding weary feet, from beaten paths and accepted roads, that she may bind God by the very importunateness of her love. That is not the kind of woman into whose ear you can drop a little formal maxim with any effect. Your religion will be to her profanity, if you cannot address her in a higher tone,—meet her just where her soul is. She is borne away by the passion of her desire; there is one dominating force in her nature that transfigures everything, that defies difficulties, that surmounts obstacles, and that waits with trembling nervous patience till God come.

### 11. Soul Bartering.

To pay the soul away for anything that the world can give, is the last degree of infatuation. Yet I feel that in talking of paying the soul away, I may be talking an unknown language, for some men hardly know themselves to be in possession of souls; they live outwards; they have no inward life; they live themselves into fields and bricks, bank-notes, chimney-shafts, and steam-engines. If you want to know anything about their souls, you must count their bales of cotton, their sacks of wheat, their bars of iron; you must not look in their eyes for the vision that pierces eternity, into their faces for lines of thought chiselled by sorrow, born of high desire, and lifelong struggle in pursuit of good; you must look into their barns, you must measure their iron safes, you must number their parchments, and set a value on their cattle, and—and—*nothing more!*

### 12. The Pricelessness of Life.

HERE is a ship caught in a terrible storm, and it is evident that loss must be suffered—the question is where shall the loss *begin*? There are vast quantities of iron, silver, gold, precious stones, and jewels in the vessel—what shall go *first*? In these moments of terrible excitement we shall probably escape some of the sophistries of ordinary reasoning, and get at the inner heart of men. Come, then, say what shall go *first*? Do the men hesitate for one moment? No! Let the iron go, then the silver, then the gold, then the precious stones—let them all go, only save the bread, save the water! What, shall the gold go and the *crust* be saved? Shall we throw out diamonds, and pearls, and works of cunning art, and save a *glass of cold water*? Men! bethink yourselves what fools are you to throw away fine metals and precious stones and save a loaf, for which the beggar on the streets of any city would hardly thank you! Is this wise? Is this prudent? You cannot—you will not hesitate for an instant, everything must go but the necessities of life; nothing has any value compared with the importance of being saved from the stormy deep; only, say they, save us from this grave that is yawning around us, and we shall be your debtors for ever! They are content to have nothing but their mere lives; no property, no ornaments, no home, no place wherein to rest their heads—only let them have life, and they will be satisfied and thankful. Pity, is it not, that it should require a storm to teach some men the first principles of common sense!

### 13. Besetting Sin—Only Latent.

I MAY remind you of the tiger that was trained to be the playmate of a favourite child. Weeks and months and years elapsed, and the tiger was gentle and playful; it so happened, however, that in licking the child's hand it tasted blood, and instantly the natural appetite of the creature was excited, and the child fell a victim to its ferocity. It is so in the moral history of many a man: there are

breaks in human life which are filled up with many excellencies, and which apparently give the lie to the charge of apostasy, and yet suddenly some besetting sin will set the whole nature on fire, and in the madness of an hour the fabric of a lifetime may be overthrown.

#### 14. Money—A Fascination.

As a mere matter of fact, known to us by distressing observation, the saving of money is as a fascination of the devil to many men; it absorbs their energies; it engrosses their time; it perverts their moral nature; it destroys natural affection; it sets them on fire of hell. Kept from the sight of gold, they may even bear a strong resemblance to pious men; they may be intelligent, genial, and entertaining; yet the moment their thoughts are turned to the accumulation of property, every trace of nobleness is destroyed.

#### 15. The Sun Blessing the Earth.

THE sun says nothing whilst doing his great work. He is silent, yet mighty; mighty, yet silent. There is no controversy proceeding between the sun and the stars as to the meaning of *summer*. The sun is not giving pictures of what summer is or of what summer might be made; he is not disputing with the other worlds which of them can make the most beautiful summer; there is no war of words in the chambers of the stars; the sun pours down his blessings on the earth, covers the world with manifold beauty, and having caused the summer to pour all its riches upon the face of the earth, he leaves men to form their own conclusions as to his might. I would be, in my measure, as is the sun. We can do much, though we say but little. It ought to be with us a question of intense and penetrating light, and not a question of debate and controversy or contention for eminence. As the sun is always working, always blessing the earth with an abundance of light, so should we, in our Christian lives, be endeavouring to bring

day and beauty and fruitfulness into the society in which we move. Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.

#### 16. The Visible Christ and the Spiritual Christ.

It was a great thing to have the visible Christ; it is a greater to have the spiritual Christ. This is a most difficult point in human education, viz., to proceed from the letter to the spirit—from the material to the immaterial. And this is the difference in scholarship—one man is learned in the letter, another is learned in the Spirit; the one is a reader, the other is a genius. In proportion as we get spiritual power are we rich for ever. You lose your friend, but you never lose his friendship.

#### 17. The Value of True Teaching.

CAN a man ever get away from his infancy? What a great and terrible responsibility, then, is yours that have to deal with the mind in its first openings, that have the very earliest interviews with human life, that meet souls just as they come from God and set a seal upon them! Let us teach as little as possible that children will have to unlearn; as far as it is practicable, their first notions, right notions. Herein we require the very highest teaching, the very highest genius and power of the church, to teach a *child*. You pronounce a word—a harsh, profane word—and that one word will leave a black spot on your child's soul for ever. You do some worldly, selfish, naughty deed, and that one deed sends a chill through the child's soul that it never quite recovers. It may be overcome for years; the memory may lie still through half a lifetime; yet, oh, it comes up when you don't want it to come! It blasts many a fair hope, and turns many a holy dream into a tormenting nightmare!

**18. Beware of Talkers.**

ALL great talkers of little talk are dangerous, not because of their power, but because of their weakness.

**19. Conscience.**

CONSCIENCE is God's monitor in the soul of man; no greater evil can befall a man, than for the sensitiveness of his conscience to be diminished in any degree. Conscience tells us what is right; conscience speaks the approving word to the well-doer; conscience may be in us as the judgment-seat of Christ.

**20. Dissent a Necessity.**

THE world could never get on as it is at present constituted but for political and religious dissent. The world would fall into stagnation, if men did not take different views of things, and did not assert with becoming language, and at right times, principles that were considered to be principles of righteousness and truth. You dissent from the Church of Rome; some dissent from us; one denomination dissents from every other denomination in some particular, less or greater. There is, therefore, as a matter of fact, this great movement of dissent amongst us, political, religious, social. We dissent from all that is corrupt, from all that is selfish, from all that is merely earthly, from all that would exert an unholy or malign influence upon the morals of society and the progress of mankind.

**21. Earnestness.**

WHEN our earnestness is not an occasional impulse, but a constant flame; when we throw ourselves entirely into our work, as though nothing could be done without us, and as if everything depended upon the utmost strain of our powers; when we anticipate the rising of the sun, and are impatient of the darkening shadows of evening, because they hinder our Christian work; when we think and speak



and labour only for the Saviour, then will men remember that it is written, "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

### 22. Trials a Blessing.

WE shall have a poor notion of life if we regard it as being a blessing only in proportion as it is a succession of sunny scenes. That is not life, it is but one aspect of it. No great life is all made up of sunshine; we get strong by discipline, we grow by strife. The great storm rocks us into rugged power, and by this power of endurance we come into the grace of gentleness. Great sorrows make tender hearts. We are softened and refreshed by the dew of tears. When we are weak, then are we strong. You never can be great and reliable, full-grown men, till your hearts have been crushed within you, and God has taught you in the gloomy school of a thousand disappointments.

### 23. The Foundation.

A BUILDING may be noble in design, ample in magnitude, commodious and convenient in all its appointments, but the one great question relates to the foundation! Of what value is it that we build loftily and broadly, with an eye to all that is beautiful in proportion and satisfactory in arrangement, if all the while we be building upon the sand? The fires will come, or the floods will descend, or the great winds will conspire to try our work, and though our work itself suffer loss, we shall be saved if we be resting upon a right foundation which God Himself has laid.

### 24. A Greater than Cæsar.

IMAGINE the Apostle Paul as a member of an assembly in Exeter Hall! As the first speaker rose, and began to compliment the chairman, setting forth how great honour the chairman was conferring upon the cause by his presidency, how the Apostle would instantly interrupt him, saying, "Sir, let us not hear such words as these! This is not

Cæsar's cause, but God's. A greater than Cæsar is here; let all your references be to Him." No man, however great his social position, whatsoever the name by which he is known amongst men, can confer the slightest honour on the Christian cause.

#### 25. Words—Value of.

WHEN a poor man says "rich," he means one thing; when a millionaire says "rich," he means something very different. Let us consider that there is morality even in the use of language. Let no man consider himself at liberty to trifle with the meaning of words. Language is the medium of intercourse between man and man, and on the interpretation of words great results depend.

#### 26. Form *v.* Spirit.

THERE is a pedantic morality amongst men which says, "The bond must be kept to the letter," and which cares nothing for the spirit of the engagement. God's morality is not a morality of ink and seals and witnesses. It involves life, spirit, motive, purpose. Were God to keep to the letter at the expense of the spirit, he would be no longer God. His unchangeableness is in His righteousness, not in His formality. Our confidence in Him is this:—That He will set aside His oldest servants, His first-chosen men, His most princely vicegerents and interpreters,—He will utterly destroy them from the face of the earth, and hurl after them the written covenants He has made with them,—if they trifle with eternal truth, with infinite purity! To cover a corrupt life with the blessing of His approbation, simply because there is a literal covenant to be carried out, would be to deny every element which makes Him God.

#### 27. In Love not in Duty.

WHEN a Christian man can deliberately consider how much Christian work he can do, and how much he can leave undone, without impairing his social relations, he

knows nothing of the spirit of Jesus Christ. So long as a man lives in the low, cold region of mere duty, he lives unto himself alone. So long as he does not get out of the region of natural conscience, he does not understand the mystery of love.

### 28. Intellect *v.* Heart.

I HAVE no fear about these people that are setting up Churches of Progress, and Churches of Science, and Churches of Literature; I have no fear of them emptying Christian sanctuaries, because a man is not all head. If he is, he is not all man. You must lay hold of his heart, and by his affections and by all his moral sympathies you must train him, and then he will be ready to receive all the light, all the knowledge you can possibly convey to him; but if you train only his intellect, you do but plant flowers upon a ghastly tomb.

### 29. Consecration.

CONSECRATION shortens life, that is to say, our days are so consumed as to appear to us but as flying shadows; there is so much to be done, there is so much reason for doing it, there is such luxury in working for Christ, that the longest day seems but as the twinkling of an eye to the soul that burns with holy ardour for the setting up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

### 30. The Eye of Omniscience.

In passing through our city streets I observe that the windows of many mercantile houses are left without defence, except huge iron bars; and it is easy to see that merchant-men have left their letters and papers upon their desks that they might return to them on the following day and continue their business. Their places are vacant and silent, yet there is in them nothing less than the presence of God Himself; and the Eye of Omniscience is passing over page after page and book after book, and God is noting the whole process and tendency of men's lives.

**31. Faith.**

STRONG and happy are those men whose lives are set, so to speak, in the key of God's Fatherhood. They grapple with difficulties in a manner which the world cannot understand; many a time, indeed, they get out of their difficulties some of the choicest blessings which enrich the heart, and, whether their realization of blessing is instant or not, they are enabled by a comprehensive and devout view of the manifold relations of life to assure themselves that in the end what has appeared to be against them has in reality been working out for them deliverance and triumph.

**32. The Fulness of Manhood.**

MAN is not fully man when he stands upon his feet; he touches the highest point of his manhood when he lifts the pinions of faith and hope, and goes off into the Unknown if haply he may find God!

**33. The Danger of Riches.**

It was thus with a man. He had nothing when he came to London. He used to run errands; to sweep, not warehouses, but the door-steps of warehouses; and to burnish bells and door-knockers, in order that he might get some little gifts to buy his next meal with; and he went on suffering daily. He said, "If God would but bring a turn upon my fortune so that I could make something, I would turn all His gifts to the blessing of my fellow-men; I would show the true use of riches; I would be a Christian; in the midst of my abounding prosperity, I would give a spiritual meaning to all the material gifts of God." His little was doubled, then his little became much, and his much became more, and he became,—what? He would not look at a poor man; he was ashamed to be seen of men who knew him in his low estate; he was a conceited, swaggering fool! Now the reverse of this case is possible. It is possible to be lifted up from the bed of affliction and become a burning,

shining light in fulfilment of a vow. It is possible to get on from nothing to little, from little to much, and in the midst of abounding prosperity to be a thankful recipient of God's mercies,—a gentle little child,—made for the time being a steward of God's gifts.

#### **34. The Good Man's Day.**

THE bad man's day is a wasting day. Every moment is a moment ticked off,—it is one fewer. But the good man's day is an augmenting quantity,—knows no diminution. Whilst it wastes, it grows; every passing hour brings the day nearer; and the day of the good man has no sunset.

#### **35. Leadership.**

HE leads best who knows the art of wise following.

#### **36. Sudden Revivals.**

WE sometimes hear that a revival has broken out "quite suddenly." There is a sense in which that description of a revival may be perfectly true,—but what of the antecedent processes? what of family religion, what of secret prayer, what of long-continued private meditation upon the holy word? These things were not known publicly; but they have been proceeding a long time, and the result is that suddenly a whole congregation is melted, and there rises from a thousand hearts a cry for the living God. These are the revivals that are to be depended upon; revivals that have a history, silent, secret, unknown. Given such a revival; and though there may be a good deal about it that is offensive to taste, and that is unduly exciting, a good deal that is intemperate, and that one would rather not see — yet there shall come of it fruit rich and abiding.

#### **37. Evil Deeds Inexpungeable.**

WE try to compensate for our evil deeds to some people, by being extra kind to other people. Brethren, it can't be

done! You used your poor friend very ill twenty years ago, and the memory of it has come upon you again and again. You have reproached yourself, and cursed yourself, for your unkindness, neglect, misapprehension, cruelty, and, in order to appease yourself, to make atonement to yourself, you have been very kind to some other friend. But you cannot touch the dead one! All your efforts towards helping Benjamin have had in them some hope of doing something at least towards making up for your cruelty to Joseph. But these efforts have been unavailing. Whilst your friend is with you, love that friend. It is but a short gray day we are together. There ought not to be time for strife, and debate, and harshness, and bitterness. The hand is already laid on the rope that shall ring the knell! And when the eyes once shut in the last sleep they don't open again. It is all over! Then come pangs, scorpions, poisonings, piercings! We would give all the world to have another hour—one more short hour—with the dear, dear, dear one! But it may not be. Whatever we do to survivors and relatives we do not touch the great and terrible blemish of our past life.

### **38. Need of Great Men.**

WE need men in society who stand apart from the little fights, petty controversies, and angry contentions which seem to be part and parcel of daily life, and who shall speak great principles, breathe a heavenly influence, and bring to bear upon combatants of all kinds considerations which shall survive all their misunderstandings.

### **39. Mystery in Life.**

THE best, wisest, and most useful men are withdrawn from their ministry! This is always a mystery in life: That the good man should be taken away in the very prime of his usefulness; that the eloquent tongue should be smitten with death; that a kind father should be withdrawn from his family circle; and that wretches who never have a noble

thought, who do not know what it is to have a brave heavenly impulse, should seem to have a tenacity of life that is unconquerable; that drunken men and hard-hearted individuals should live on and on,—while the good, and the true, and the wise, and the beautiful, and the tender, are snapped off in the midst of their days and translated to higher climes. The old proverb says, "Whom the gods love die young." Sirs! there is another side to this life, otherwise these things would be inexplicable,—would be chief of the mysteries of God's ways. We must wait, therefore, until we see the circle completed before we sit in judgment upon God.

#### **40. Beware of Apathy.**

Now and then we require to be startled a little. Men do us good who rouse us. The preacher who makes me shake does me good,—who gives me one new view of truth, who rouses me out of my indifference, who gives me to feel that as yet I know next to nothing. So in daily life, things that are common sometimes flame up before us into new significance, and old ruts seem sometimes to have new spikes of grass and new roots coming out of them. These things call us away from apathies that would benumb and deaden the soul.

#### **41. Prayer.**

WHAT is love if it be not fiery? What is prayer if it be not the heart on a blaze? Prayer is not mere articulation; prayer is not mere words. Prayers are battles; prayers are the thunders which call for God when He seems to be far away!

#### **42. Sudden Conversions.**

It is sometimes asked, "Is conversion a sudden act or is it a process?" It is both. Severe critics say, "We have no faith in these sudden conversions." We must ask such critics to name the particular meaning they associate with

the expression *sudden conversions*? A man is suddenly turned to God. Who can tell how long that man's mind has been undergoing a secret preparation? His mother taught him God's word when he was a little child,—the Sunday-school teacher stored his memory with sacred passages when he was an immature youth. He has had personal and relative affliction; he has been disappointed in business; he has been undergoing manifold discipline. What if in one moment all this should come to a point, and that point should be called conversion? An action is not necessarily extemporaneous because it is sudden. A speaker may not know the next sentence he is going to utter, and yet he may not be speaking extemporaneously in any shallow sense of that word. His *whole life* may be a preparation; every day may be one continual prayer for more light and more power, and when the time comes on which he has to open his lips, he is not speaking something which he wrought in one moment,—he is speaking the experience of a life-time; he is bringing out of the fountain of his experience a stream for the refreshing of those who wait upon him. There are some moments in which is gathered up the force of a life-time.

#### 43. The Church—a Fire.

**FIRE** is *purifying*. Is the Church to be a sanctifying force in the world? Verily so. Fire is cheering, comforting. The fire of the sun blesses the earth, and all the worlds that wait upon his glowing ministry. Is the Church to cheer and comfort, to enliven and animate mankind? Undoubtedly so. Christianity without glowing love is Christianity minus Christ.

#### 44. Solemn Moments of Life.

**LIFE** is not one long holiday. Life is not to be spent upon one continuous level. There are some single moments in our life which make us old. There are some visions, which take but the flash of an eye to look at, which make us old



men. Look at Samuel, for the first time hearing of God. Is it not a solemn moment when we get our first notion of the infinite? Can you recall your mental sensations or spiritual condition when you first began to feel that yonder distant, dim horizon is but a trembling, almost transparent curtain, and that just behind it, so to speak, lies God's eternity? After such a moment as that a man can never, if he has made a right use of it, fall back into the littleness and contemptibleness of the life that thinks the world a nutshell, that calls time all duration. Some of us have had these solemn moments in our life; when we have heard a Voice we did not know, and from that moment we have never ceased to hear it; it has been the sub-tone of all that has reached our ear, it has been in the hum of all nature, it has been louder than the thunder, it has been softer than softest zephyr of the spring.

#### 45. Work—Manual and Mental.

THERE is a very great mistake made about work. The man who takes a spade at six o'clock in the morning, and works with it without breakfast, dinner, or tea, till six o'clock at night, is undoubtedly a working man. But there are men who work much harder than he works, who have no spades, and who hardly ever touch any kind of manual labour. I find no greater difficulty amongst so-called Christian people than this,—to convince them that a man can *work* with his brain and heart. They will look at a man's hands, and say, "That man has not done much work in his time, or his hands would not be so white." A fool's philosophy! A man may work, and never take his hands out of his pockets; he may work, and have his hands gloved from morning till night.

#### 46. The Influence of One Life.

WHO can tell what may be done by one man? I shall not quote the testimony of a friend on this point, because he might be partial in his judgment. But once an enemy

gave explicit testimony upon this point, and we shall accept his words just as he himself gave them. His name was Demetrius; he was an idol-maker; trade was slipping out of his fingers fast; he was not making so many gods as usual; and he spake to the people of the city in these words: "Ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul persuadeth and turneth away much people, saying, That they be no gods which are made with hands." It was a valuable testimony. This Paul! Not ten thousand Pauls, not a great army of Pauls, but one little man, with an immeasurably great soul, was not only working mightily in Ephesus against idolatry, but throughout all Asia! What *one* life can do! Don't despise yourself; don't say, "My little influence is of no avail." Every man can be intense, though only few men can be extensive in influence.

#### 47. The Secret of Influence.

THIS is the secret of great influence: indignation,—calmness,—righteousness incorruptible and inexorable,—devoutness that stoops to pray for the fallen, the foul, the evil-minded, and the debased.

#### 48. The Transientness of Atheism.

WE never find—taking great breadths of history, ages and centuries—that the human has been able to exist alone, and to grow upward and onward in its atheism. We do find hours in which atheism seems to carry everything its own way. There are occasions in human history when God seems to be utterly deposed, when a whole nation has got up and out-voted God, emptied heaven, brought down the sky to the dust; but never lifted up the dust to the sky! Observe that such periods have been but occasional; they have always been transitory, and in proportion to the length of their duration has there afterwards gone up a cry to God, that he would come back again.

**49. Standing Still.**

It is a difficult lesson to learn that strength is to stand still and patiently wait for the coming of God. Calmness is not weakness; rest does not display want of ability. Men do not stand still in the true sense of that term, simply because they have nothing they can do; but they stand still with most grace, with complete and impressive dignity, when they are simply waiting for the coming down of God to their rescue.

**50. Punctuality in Church Payments.**

I HAVE heard of a minister who was paid his quarterly salary by instalments. The treasurer of the church would give him a pound or two now and then, and promise him more when the pew-rents were paid. It is a popular mistake to suppose that punctuality is not needed in church payments. Punctuality on the side of the church will assist punctuality on the side of the minister. It is our happy conviction that by far the majority of ministers are punctually paid; at the same time there are exceptions enough to justify this reference.

**51. Noise not Life.**

It is a common error to suppose that a church is dead because it is not making a noise. Some people would keep up a continued round of tea-meetings, bazaars, Dorcases, holiday-makings, and trumpet-blowings, and advertise the same as signs of spiritual life. Some injudicious man once drew a distinction between perspiration and inspiration. He must have had his eye upon the people in question. Spiritual life is generally quiet. There may be periods of intense excitement, but they cannot last. We should remember that the river is not deepest where it is noisiest.

**52. Sympathy of Jesus.**

WHERE will you equal the Son of God? I question whether there be a mother who would not give up pursuit

for the prize if Jesus Christ were her competitor. There is a more than motherliness, a more than sisterliness, in His gentle care, His soothing sympathy, in relation to these things which are not generally counted under the term *religion*. I should like men, in view of this doctrine, to see that there is nothing in their whole life that Jesus Christ would not undertake for them if they would let Him. He would make them happy in their affliction; He would support them in the time of their tottering weakness; He would take the vessel out of their hands and run to the well-head that He might bring them water! Yet there be men who think that Jesus Christ confines His ministry to things that are transcendental, sublime, far away, and inaccessible! This is a profound delusion. There is nothing about you that Jesus Christ does not take an interest in. When your pulse is feeble and staggering, He feels it in His own heart; when you are laid down in weakness, in exhaustion and pain, He looks in upon you long before the morning sun comes to pay his early visit; when there is little meal in the barrel and not much oil in the cruse, He knows about it and would provide for us. He lays down this doctrine, which ought to revolutionize society and bring men to considerations profound and pious: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He speaks about "these things" with a scornful accent, with an emphasis which means that they are not worthy of thinking about in comparison with the kingdom which includes all other empires—a monarchy which binds within its vast embrace all petty lordships, all transient dominions.

### 53. True Peace.

PEACE is not a compromise with circumstances. It does not come out of an interlocution which runs after this fashion: "Let me alone, and I will let you alone; if you will be quiet, I will be quiet; let us proclaim a truce." Rest is not a *compromise*. It is a Divine reality in the

heart. Righteousness is rest,—holiness is peace,—rectitude with God, coming through trust in the atonement of God the Son, means tranquillity deep and unchanging as the peace of God which passeth understanding!

#### 54. Preachers and their Hearers.

It is a popular error to mistake that *length* is the only dimension of a sermon. A man said to a minister, "Your sermons are too short." Said the minister, "If you will practise all I preach you will find them quite long enough." A sentence may be a sermon. It is too true that some sermons are tediously long, yet even in some of those cases it should be remembered that there are bad hearers as well as bad preachers. The man in the front pew (of any church) who holds down his head or trifles with his prayer-book during the sermon will be a trouble to the best preacher. There should be at least one electrical hearer in every church. The preacher will soon find him out.

#### 55. "Glorious!"

GLORIOUS. Sometimes this word is used very carelessly, off-handedly, without special meaning or application to the subject in hand. Sometimes men use it in the heat of speech, when they would not write it in the calmness of their studies. For example:—Men will exclaim, "What a glorious landscape!" "What a glorious river!" "What a glorious scene!" Up to a given point the application of that word may, under such circumstances, be allowable; yet, if submitted to criticism and to reason, they would say who had used the word that a term less fervent, less comprehensive, might be substituted with advantage for the word glorious. As used by the Apostle Paul in this verse, is the word glorious merely an ecstatic expression? Is it used merely to relieve an overflowing emotion on his part? or is there under it reason, argument, solidity, indefeasible right and title to so magnificent a description? There is morality in language. If we ought not to say that a pound

has in it twenty ounces, we ought not to say that an object is glorious when it is not glorious,—especially when we deal with the highest questions and considerations which affect human character and destiny. We ought to be precise, critical, definite, in the language which we employ.

#### **56. A Sorry Recompense.**

A SCOTCHMAN asked a minister for five shillings, and in return for the favour, said, "I'll give you a day's hearing some time." It is undoubtedly understood by many that in listening to a minister they are conferring a favour upon him. A person once asked me to lend him a sovereign, and in support of his request informed me that he had long attended my ministry. Possibly the man richly deserved a sovereign for having done so; at the same time it is a popular mistake to suppose that the minister is the party receiving the favour. He gives his hearers his best thinking, his best power of all kinds, and it is therefore a pity to show him thankfulness by borrowing money of him.

#### **57. Abuse of Church Privilege.**

WE are growingly of opinion that all self-contained and self-ruling churches afford great scope for the play of the worst passions of half-christianized nature. Little men are invested with great power. The hand of a clodhopper counts as much as the hand of a philosopher. Church squabbling is the only recreation which some persons allow themselves. The shopkeeper primes himself with arguments against the minister; the most impertinent member of the Mutual Improvement Society turns over in his "mind" the best way of assailing his pastor; the purse-proud upstart, whose grandfather never wore a pair of boots, determines to "have it out at the next church-meeting;" and various other seat-holders plot a little ecclesiastical mischief in their several ways.

**58. The True Standard.**

WISDOM is not measurable by physical magnitude. The large man may be a little man. The little body may shelter a great soul. The elephantine and prodigious body may hardly have a soul at all. These things are perfectly well known to every one of us, yet we require to be reminded of them with some frequency, because so many appeals are addressed to our senses. We are called upon to admire mere bigness, bulk, surface, and weight. The same terms do not always mean the same thing. Sometimes little is not merely little.

**59. Work of the Minister.**

It is a popular error to suppose that a gig can go on one wheel. The minister must have the co-operation of his hearers. They must be workers together. The minister cannot beg and organize and visit and preach and preside, —get up bazaars, establish societies, collect for chapel debts, tell anecdotes at sewing meetings, and reconcile all the differences which arise between two and ninepence and half-a-crown. He is called to preach the gospel,—work enough for the strongest powers! Let him be encouraged and honoured in his holy vocation.

**60. Repose.**

REPOSE, quietness is the last phase of the highest life. Rest is the ultimate condition of motion. If the earth were to go one mile less in a thousand years she would stagger in her course, her velocity is her safety, and the last result of her motion is rest, and so it must be with us. Be assured that the true test of our growth is the depth and reality of our rest and repose. When fear comes upon a nation, in proportion to the depth of piety in that nation will be its calmness. Is there some great cloud lowering and darkening over your dwelling-place? In proportion to your piety

will be the depth, calm, and placidity of your hearts. You will not be going about here and there, rushing hither and thither, as if depending upon yourself. You will feel the time has now come in which your strength is to stand still, and in which you will be most happy doing nothing. That is a hard lesson for some natures to learn—for men who believe in what they term variety, for men of energy, men of great enthusiasm of spirits.

#### 61. One Blessed for Another's Sake.

ONE man blessed for the sake of another. Here is a great law,—here is a special lesson for many. A man looks at his property, and reasons that he must be good, and approved of God, otherwise he never could have so many blessings in his possession. It never enters the man's mind that he has every one of these blessings for the sake of another man. The master blessed because he has a good servant! Would to God I could speak thunder-claps and speak lightning to many thousands in our city and throughout our land to-day upon this very matter! Here is a man, for example, who never enters a place of worship. No, no,—not he. His wife is a member of the Church, and if ever she is five minutes late in on Sunday, his mighty lordship foams and fumes, and is not going to be put upon in this way, and have his household arrangements upset by these canting, fanatical, religious people. What shall I call him? The wretch, the almost-devil, owes every penny he has to his dishonoured praying wife. If that woman—the only angel in God's universe that cares for his soul—were to cease praying for him, God might rain fire and brimstone upon him and his dwelling-place. He does not know it. No! He is shrewd, cunning, wide-awake, has his eyes open, knows when the iron is hot and when to strike it, and he is such a wonderful genius in business. A maniac—not knowing that it is his praying wife that saves him from ruin, meanwhile from hell



**62. Little Things.**

**THERE** is a sublimity in little things. As the sun can be reflected by a dew-drop, so the whole infinitude of God's power and wisdom may shine up out of the arrangements which God has made for the comfort, progress, discipline, and defence of his people.

**63. God's Provision.**

**THERE** is not a word on our tongue, there is not a thought in our heart, but lo! O Jesus, Son of man, Thou knowest it *altogether*! And, knowing it, has He left it unprovided for? See what He has done for the recruiting of man's physical strength, and then say if He who can be so careful about restoring the body would leave the recovery of the mind and soul altogether unprovided for. He has answered that every day and eventide. He sends a cooling shadow over the earth, and, as it wraps all things in its darkness, it seems to say, "Rest a while." See how above every week He has set that singing, shining Sabbath Day of His, to quiet men, to give them a moment's rest in the great strife and chase of life! If He has made an evening to each day, —a Sabbath to each week,—if He has in many ways shown an interest in men's bones, muscles, nerves, and sinews,—has He forgotten the immortal soul? has He made no answer to the cry of the heart when it is weary and sad, when it sighs for release and rest? His whole life is an answer to that inquiry. "Come unto Me," said He, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He meets us, therefore, at every point. He provides for the aching limb, and answers the sigh of the weary heart!

**64. The True Standard.**

**SOMETIMES** greatness is greatness *minus*. Some pounds have sixteen ounces in them, other pounds have only twelve. Butchers and silversmiths do not reckon by the same arith-

metical tables. In a prosperous condition of society, a single diamond may be worth more money than all the beasts in a cattle market; but in times of famine one lamb will be more precious than all the diamonds in kings' houses. Value varies according to circumstances. He is the wise man who knows the one thing whose value never changes, which overbalances and reduces to insignificance the pomp of unintelligent creation. If we lay hold of these things and estimate values correctly, it will help in the adjustment of social relations and in the appreciation of those virtues which ought ever to be uppermost in a true condition of society. We are called upon to remember that wisdom, and wisdom alone, is the true standard of measurement; that the humblest life is greater than the sublimest art, and that one spark of intellect is infinitely more precious than the most crushing animal strength.

"Were I so tall to reach the pole,  
Or grasp the ocean in my span,  
I must be measured by my soul—  
The mind's the standard of the man."

### **65. Repose, the Last Result of Piety.**

It was when your business became so imperilled, impoverished, and racked that you began to cry out for the living God. It was when physicians had given you up, and your best friends had bidden you adieu, that you began to think whether there was not after all some secret in religion you had not yet known, and some safety in piety of which you had been up to that time heedless. And so in many relations of life, we have found in extremity what we never found in prosperity, and our weakness has become our strength. And in the consolidation of our highest life we must remember that repose, not strife, is the last result of piety. We want most succour when we are most effusive. We are only half-trained and probably ill-trained men, so long as we show signs of anxiety, fear, suspicion, apprehension about the future.

**66. Effects of Fear.**

**MEN** have lived lives of practical atheism year after year; and when there has been a panic in the market, they have bethought themselves of old memories, early vows, first Christian loves; and they have turned pious because there was a panic barking at them like a mad wolf,—they have begun to pray, and heaven sent back their voice unanswered, unblest! We must not play with our religion. I will guarantee that this place of worship be filled at five o'clock in the morning and at twelve o'clock at night under given circumstances. Let there be a plague in the city—let men's hearts fail them for fear—let them feel that all that is material is insecure—that nothing is real but the invisible and the spiritual—and they will instantly attend churches and chapels by the thousand, and be very humble in the presence of God. *Sirs*, this will not do! God is not to be moved by incantations, by decent formalities, and external reverences. He will answer the continuous cry of the life. The man who prays without ceasing may ever count upon the interposition of God.

**67. Sovereignty of God.**

**WHY** can't I sow my seed in the field in August, and reap my harvest in February? Here is the earth, yonder is the shining sun, the healthful vital air is breathing its benediction over the world. Why, then, seeing that I have light and soil and moisture and air, can I not plant my seed when I like and reap it when I please? But you can't do so. Your theory may abstractly look very liberal and noble, but facts are against you. Why can't you devise some new plan of getting bread? Why should you submit to the old humdrum way of ploughing the earth, and throwing in seed, and reaping the wheat, and grinding it, and turning it into bread? Why can't you be original, inventive, creative as to your daily food? You are a man. You can think, you can conspire, you can plot, you can curse and swear, you can blaspheme God. Why can't you be original in the

way of getting the morsel of food you want day by day? Yet God shuts you up within the prison of his laws. He cages you within the bars of His sovereign limitations. You may chafe, blaspheme, roar against him like a beast of prey, but you must submit.

#### 68. The Prepared Place.

JESUS CHRIST says, "I go to prepare a place for you. I have made worlds, stars, planets, comets; I have sent forth the lightning and uttered the thunder. Now I am going to do my greatest deed of all. I am going to get a place ready for those whom I have bought with my blood and glorified by my Spirit." What kind of place will *He* get ready for us, who has all things at command,—when the silver and gold are His, when He can speak light and command worlds to fashion themselves and shine upon His children? What kind of place will *He* get ready? You like to be prepared for. If the person preparing for you is poor, you take every little deed as a great deed. If the person preparing for you has ample resources and receives you as if—"Really, well you had come after all; but, at the same time, it would have been quite as well if you had lost your way,"—you naturally feel indignant, dissatisfied, resentful, because it *might* have been done nobly. Jesus Christ has gone to prepare a place. We judge men by the capacity of their resources. We have seen what He *has* done. If He has loved us with unutterable love, He will enrich us with inconceivable glory. The riches which He has are called "the unsearchable riches of Christ." "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared." "Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter the kingdom prepared for you."

#### 69. Poetry of Life.

AY; and life without poetry is life *minus* life. This is a very remarkable thing, that any one man could ever be

found who could say from his heart, with the emphasis of personal conviction, "My joy does not depend on the things that are outside me."

#### 70. Solo *v.* Chorus.

You have been at a great musical festival. You observed that there were two classes of singers,—the solo singers and the chorus performers. One man has stood out alone. Thousands of ears were opened to catch the tones of his voice; thousands of eyes were glistening upon him, in expectation of one of the grandest treats that can touch human sensibility, rouse human emotion, and turn human power to some blessed purpose. He was a solo singer. When he sits down, four thousand men will rise and repeat in thunder what he has spoken in the exquisiteness of his personal voice,—the same sentiment if not the same words,—maintain the tone by combination which he began in personal power. It is the same with the church; and that is where so many of us get wrong. A number of little fellows, with voices like halfpenny whistles, come out and say "We sing a solo." And they *can't*. Are we then for ever to shut them up in silence? Nothing of the kind. We say, "Get back into the gallery; and when it is your turn, come and stand up and be lost among the thousands, and still contribute your little tone, your little sigh, to the grand outburst.

#### 71. Extremes.

WHEN Jeremiah does laugh his joy will be rich and full; when he does sing he will fill heaven and earth with his resounding joy. No man can be truly joyful who has not been deeply, heart-brokenly sorrowful.

#### 72. Hard Work the Condition of Success.

A MAN does not by shaking his little arms shake himself into scholarship; it is not done by a wave of the hand. It

is done in yonder way:—See! where the man gets up before the lark, before the sun calls him with its voice of light, who trims his lamp, and goes over yesterday's lesson in critical review before he begins to-day's study; pulls himself up by every variety of discipline; cudgels his memory, stores his mind with all kinds of literature; who works after the sun has gone away, to take the morning with him to some distant clime, turning over the pages of his book—not as you turn over the pages of your light reading—but reading every word, studying every sentence, extracting the gold from every book. We say, "Why are you doing this?" "Because," he says, "I am determined to be a subject in the kingdom of learning, and the motto over the gates is this, 'Strait and narrow is the gate, the road.'"

### 73. Faith Tested.

A MAN goes out in the morning to see how his fields are getting on, and they are all covered with blight. He has only a few acres; he thinks he will try hay this year, because last year other people tried and had a good crop. He tries hay: the hay is a most beautiful crop, but just as he has cut it, or would have cut it, the rain descends, and he can't gather a spike of it. To be able then to say, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," that is faith! But who can attain to that great, exquisite, infinite refinement of trust?

### 74. The Stone Rolled Away.

I SAY, in my hours of weakness, yonder is a stone which I cannot remove. If I could get clear of that obstacle all would be right; but the stone is heavy, the stone is sealed, the stone is watched. What can I do? I go up the hill wearily, almost hopelessly, and behold! the stone is rolled away, and on the obstacle there sits the angel of God. Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think!

**75. A Mother's Prayer.**

BLESSED are the men who have had praying mothers. The influence of that fact they cannot shake off. They may curse and swear, and go to the very boundary of the pit, and go into the pit; and I question whether, through all their suffering, they can ever shake off the influence of having had a praying mother. The mother's devotion comes up in the boy's veneration, love of right, conscientiousness, magnanimous hope, gentle courage.

**76. Sneering.**

IN almost every family there is somebody that has the power of sneering at other people; in most households undoubtedly there are members who can drop just one scalding drop into a sore place and make it sorer. It can be done so that you cannot print it and publish it; it can be done so that you cannot report it; it can be done so that you can only *feel* it. These are the miseries that damn many lives.

**77. Ability of Christ.**

WHEREVER you find Jesus Christ you find Him working for His people,—doing something for those who believe in Him and love Him. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." There is a beautiful necessity of love about this arrangement. For if He were to fail *here*,—fail in training, educating, sanctifying the Church,—He would fail altogether? What if He has made countless millions of stars? Can the stars talk to Him? Can He get back the idea which He gave? Can He have sympathy with form, substance, glory, majesty, as found in mere matter? If He does not get us—poor, broken things—right into his blue, glad heaven, He has failed! That is the one work which He set Himself to do. If He drops one poor little child out of His great arms because He has not capacity and strength enough, He could never be happy in His heaven. Think of this :—Christ always thinking for us,

caring for us, going out in all the passion of His love after us, and then say whether the Church ought always to have tears in her eyes and never to have peace in her heart?

#### 78. Plain Speaking.

PLAIN speaking would become one of the most influential agents in the purification of our social intercourse. Many men speak plainly, but they speak their plain words so that the right individual may have no opportunity of hearing them. There are some men who are very courageous when the enemy is at least ten miles off. There are many persons who imagine that they have actually spoken plainly to the individuals who have been hypocritical and false when they have told their friends, in a semi-confidential tone, that they very *nearly* said so and so.

#### 79. Two Classes of Faith.

LOOK at your constitution; inquire into your own physiology; see its complications, and yet its marvellous simplicity; how beautifully it is adapted to secure the end for which it is made. Can you look at the functions of your own body and yet doubt the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Supreme Being? Suppose the man to yield the argument and to talk in this way: "I confess that I myself, in my physical constitution, am the first argument in support of deism. When I come back to myself from my theorizing and speculations, I myself stand between myself and the darkness of atheism. I allow that." Habakkuk comes to him and says, "You are reading the alphabet; you have got a very little way in the great literature of God's existence and providence. Though this body should pine away, wither, and hasten to the chambers of death, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. My dying hand shall lift the fragment of a blade; my last word shall be victory!" So long as a man stands before himself, looks at his own finger, any one faculty or function of his body, he is saved from atheism.



But impair himself and you impair his faith. Alter, if you can, his physiology, and you alter his theology along with it. Habakkuk says: "Man! my theology is not a question of physiology. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. I am more than body: I find God in the depths of my subjective life." So, then, there are two classes of *faith*. The faith that reads the big letters of figs, vines, olives, fields, flocks, herds; the faith that sees beyond the letter into the living spirit, and that cannot be shaken with anything that is external.

#### 80. Heaven in the Soul.

HEAVEN is not in the jasper wall, and the pavement of gold, in the sparkling fountains, and the amaranths immortal as the beauty of God. Heaven is in the spirit, in the disposition, in the soul. If a man could get into God's heaven, and have with him—not a bad deed, not hands stained, tainted, and blackened through and through—but just an unexpressed desire, something between a thought and a thing, that is impure and untrue, that one spot would ruin his heaven, and he would long to get out of it. He who goes not in by the gate and travels not by the narrow road, even if he could be admitted into heaven, would soon wish to be out again.

#### 81. Going in for Influence.

A MAN says, "Now then, I am going in for influence." And so he dresses for influence, looks for influence, smiles for influence, coughs for influence, turns round and round for influence, and by the time he has had seven years at it, people are laughing all round, and saying, "What an extraordinarily foolish man that is!" At the end of a much shorter time than that such a man has all the influence he deserves, and that is no influence at all. All great life, Divine life, life like God's, is not to be calculated about, and argued out, and worked out in that ridiculous fashion.

**82. God's Voice in Adversity.**

WE do not read the deepest of God's words, and the tenderest of His messages, when there is no cloud in the sky, when the morning is bright and blue and lustrous, and there is no intercepting cloud. God often lowers His voice to a whisper when the heart-broken feel that the clouds are very many and the way crooked and extremely perilous.

**83. Spiritual Luxury.**

THERE is a species of spiritual luxury which amounts to the most terrible temptation and snare. Do you say there are times when you feel as if you could wash the feet of the poorest disciple of Christ? Then why don't you do it? You wear away your feeling, and incapacitate yourself for its recurrence in all its finest sensibility, by allowing it to reach the highest point without turning it into the most condescending service.

**84. Bearing Trouble.**

WE are to struggle after the attainment which will enable us to say, "Although *my* fig tree shall not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Some of us can bear the failures of other people's fig trees with marvellous composure; we can look over the farmer's gate and say, "Ha! it is a bad year for farmers this, is it not?" But if the blight should come upon our little section of life, where are we? If the panic should touch our department, what of our faith and our joy then?

**85. God's Wisdom.**

GOD is *all-wise*. There is no searching of His understanding. Infinite strength would terrify us, but infinite strength under the dominion of infinite mind recovers us from the tremendous shock which comes of abstract, immeasurable, unwasting strength. The forces of nature are not lawless.

Storms are more than storms, as they appear to us. Behind them all is God's mind, God's controlling, directing intelligence. The lightning does not come out at its own bidding to smite the tree, and the tower, and the temple, and to blight the prospects of man. The lightning always comes and strikes, or passes on, at God's bidding, and under God's control. The east wind is not sent to us by some spiteful power that takes delight in withering up our strength; it comes because the Lord hath need of it in some sense or way.

### 86. Judging Christianity.

CHRISTIANITY is not to be judged by the lowest, but by the highest. We should not judge the repute of a medical hospital by the attainments of a student who has been scarcely a month within its walls; it would be unfair to judge the master by the apprentice; why, then, seize upon an immature professor of the Christian religion, and judge Christianity by his imperfect and tottering character?

### 87. Self-control.

THE great principle, as it seems to me, which is represented by the tree in the midst of the garden, is the principle of *self-control*, and the prohibition imposed upon man involves, not a *threat*, but a *warning*. When you tell your child that if he puts his hand into the fire he will be burned, you do not *threaten* him, you *warn* him, and your word should be accepted as an expression of love; so, when the Creator told the creature not to overstep certain boundaries because such trespass would result in death, He did not *threaten* man with punishment, He mercifully pointed out the awful *consequences* of a given course.

### 88. God's Relation to the World.

WE shall be much comforted in this pilgrim life if we think of God's relation to places, habitations, countries, and geographical positions. The wilderness and the garden are

God's; the fountain and the stream are directed in their course by the creating mind. Men are not here and there by haphazard. Cities are not founded by mere chance. Before the city there was a process of reasoning; before the process of reasoning there was Divine suggestion—geography, as well as astronomy, is of God. "The earth is the Lord's." I would be where God wills: with His blessing the desert shall be pleasant as the fruitful field;—without it the fruitful field shall mock the appetite which it tempts, and the river shall become as blood in my mouth.

#### 89. Human Leaders.

ONE man is called to stand nearer God than another, and to interpret the purposes of God to the world. There is an empty defiance which proclaims itself in the well-known terms, "I don't pin my faith to any man's sleeve;" "I think for myself." There is nothing but vanity in such lofty pretensions, made, indeed, the more mischievous by the grain of truth which barely saves them from the charge of insanity. As a matter of fact, we do pin our faith to each other's sleeve. Lot believes in Abram, the weak believe in the strong; we all follow our respective captains and leaders.

#### 90. Self-knowledge.

No man who knows himself deeply, will be the man to claim supremacy in virtue. The more a man knows himself, the more he will say, that though his hands be clean, there are stains in his heart, and there are flaws in his spiritual life.

#### 91. "Past Feeling."

IT is a solemn and terrible truth, that a man may so live as to discourage the moral voice that is within him. Hence we read that some men are "past feeling;" they can now do the things which ten years ago they could not have done without a shudder. To-day they can utter language with-

out feeling that they are trespassing upon propriety or delicacy, not to say upon spiritual refinement, which they could not have uttered perhaps twelve months ago, without blushing and without self-accusation. It is possible for a man to live down his conscience; possible for a man to drug the monitor that is within him which teaches the difference between right and wrong.

### 92. Necessity of the Bible.

WHO are you, that you should be a revelation to yourself? Look at the mistakes of your lifetime and shut your self-written Bible. He ought to be a very wise man who can, gracefully and with aught of authoritativeness, close the book of God and say, "I can do without it." He may be speaking sincerely, but he is speaking ignorantly.

### 93. Joyfulness of Christianity.

IF you come into contact with a preacher of Christ, or with a private expositor of Christian truth, who is constantly enveloped in gloom and melancholy, whose soul is in sorrow, and from whose lips there never come the sounds of music and joy, set it down as a fact that that teacher knows nothing about the spirit of the Gospel. The keynote of the Gospel is joy; the watch-word of the Gospel is liberty. The Gospel does not come to us to make us sadder, to bring us down in the dust and keep us there, as if we had no right to be up in the sunshine; and therefore any ministry, public or private, that increases our gloom, is a ministry that never came out of yonder great central Light that is the Light of the universe.

### 94. True Genius.

GRACE is genius. There is a graceless, godless, atheistic thing called genius, but I call it insanity; the light of its eye is not the light of heaven, but the flare of an unholy and unconsecrated fire. God hath "hidden" certain things from the "wise and prudent, and revealed them unto

babes;" He has left the wise shivering outside the guardian wall, and taken the "babes" with Him to behold the growths of the paradise that never can be lost.

#### 95. Living in Others.

THERE are some of us that do not care much what becomes of anybody that is a few yards from us. If we are told that they have been recovered and saved, we may tamely, and with an insipidity that is sickening, say we are glad to hear it; but that is not life—that is a satire upon life, a wretched travesty on all that is divine in our nature. He lives who lives in others, and whose soul expands and glows when it hears that some poor wretched creature has been taken up out of the dust, has been recovered to confidence, and has been set up in some high place of honour and esteem. Just as we reach that feeling, just as we understand that principle, do we come into the mystery of that love which fills the heart of the Saviour, and gives Him satisfaction for the travail of His soul.

#### 96. Abram's Altar.

ABRAM set up his altar along the line of his march to the Land of Promise. Blessed are they whose way is known by marks of worship. The altar is the highest seal of ownership. God will not lightly forsake His temples. This setting up of the altar shows that our spiritual life ought to be attested by outward sign and profession. Abram had the promise in his heart, yet he did not live a merely contemplative life; he was not lost in religious musings and prophesyings—he built his altar and set up his testimony in the midst of his people, and made them sharers of a common worship.

#### 97. The Good Man's Security.

THE terribleness of God is the good man's security. When the good man sees God wasting the mountains and the hills, and drying up the rivers, he does not say, "I must

worship Him; or He will destroy me;" he says, "*The beneficent side of that power is all mine*; because of that power I am safe; the very lightning is my guardian, and in the whirlwind I hear a pledge of benediction." The good man is delivered from the fear of power; power has become to him an assurance of rest; he says, "My Father has infinite resources of judgment, and every one of them is to my trusting heart a signal of unsearchable riches of mercy."

**98. "Show your Ticket!"**

MEN have sometimes to show their tickets. Sometimes I have been with men who, in reply to the question or demand "Show your tickets," have grumbled out in a kind of half-sleepy way, "Season," and the porter, somehow, has not quite believed them, and he has said, "I must look at it, sir, if you please." Yes, a man cannot take a ticket at the beginning, and call out "Season," to everybody that asks him what right he has to be there. He must renew his position—he must renew his claim—he must again and again do certain things that will give him a further hold and lease upon public confidence and social honour. It cannot be done once for all. My dear young friends, you cannot in your teens do something that will save all your after-life from any further service. You may take a good long spell at once; you may do some noble thing that will go on sounding and reduplicating for a few years; but you must again and again renew yourselves, and prove that your manhood is not stagnant, but a continuous and mighty development.

**99. "Many Regiments—but one Army."**

THINK of a man saying, that he has been looking round and sees that there are so many denominations, that really he has made up his mind to give up the whole thing! Does he know what he is talking about? Is he really serious when he speaks so? Shall I follow his example?

If I do it will be to show how great is his folly. "I have been looking round, and see so many different regiments in the country that really it is impossible to tell which is right and which is wrong, and I do not think I shall have anything to do with the country." Yes, there are *many regiments* but *one army*, many denominations but one Church, many creeds but one faith, many aspects but one life, many ways up the hill but one Cross on the top of it. Don't lose yourself among the diversities, when you might save yourself by looking at the unities. "There are so many mountains about, that I really do not know that there can be any truth in geography." *Many mountains—one globe!*

#### 100. God's Care for Man.

GOD is far more concerned about us than we can be about ourselves. We make a great deal of fuss about our position. We make all the noise, but He does all the work. We make tumult and demonstration, and show great anxiety and great distraction, and after all our Father which is in Heaven, and who is looking down upon our daily strife, is really more deeply concerned in our highest welfare than we can be ourselves. We see portions of things. We see edges of life. We mistake the fraction for the whole number; we mistake the decimal for the integer. He sees the whole circle of relations, proportions, and bearings of the inward parts of our life; and when we think Him least careful of us, He may at that very moment be preparing for us, for our enjoyment and strength, some of his richest and best gifts.

#### 101. Standing on Self-sufficiency.

So long as we had one single inch on which we could stand, we have been self-reliant, boastful, and almost atheistically hopeful. So long as we have had one hair's breadth that we could call our own, we have said even yet we may work this thing out and right the mystery our-



selves; and it was not until that hair's breadth was taken away from us, and we were altogether in extremity, that we began to feel how terrible a thing it would be if there were no God in the heavens, and if no Father's heart were brooding over the earth.

### 102. Giving for Christ.

A MAN gives away a sovereign in Christ's name and for Christ's sake. Look at the elements which constitute that act and give it value. The man made the sovereign honestly; it is his, in point of fair service, by what is called right. If he keeps that sovereign he will break no law in commerce; if he will it away to his family, he will violate no law in social equity; if he spend it upon himself, society will not condemn him. Yet the man deliberately gives that sovereign away to a poor child, to a friendless stranger, to a Christian society. See what lies behind the deed. The man says, in effect if not in words, "The money may be mine, but I myself am not my own. How then can anything be mine, except temporarily, and under laws of stewardship and responsibility? I have no property in myself; I am bought with a price; I am God's agent. So far as I have given society an equivalent for this sovereign, it is mine; but the strength, the skill, the knowledge by which I gained it are the gifts of God. The image is Cæsar's, but the gold is God's. I will hold what I have as Christ's; holding it so, I instantly yield it at His call, saying,—Thine—oh wounded blessed Christ—thine is the right!" So this giving away of the sovereign is not an off-hand deed; it is not done flippantly; it is not done to save appearances; it is not done from external social pressure; it becomes a great religious act, a solemn sacrifice, a holy thank-offering.

### 103. The Selfish Man.

THE whole universe is a protest against the selfish man. The light-streaming sun, the former and the latter rain,

the life-laden air, the odorous flower, the gift-bearing seasons, and yonder dear Father giving Himself away in every pulsation of His being,—these are against thee, oh selfish heart! and when thou totterest towards the gate of dismissal to find thine own place, thou shalt depart without regret as thou hast lived without love. The selfish man going out of the world. Such is the picture. He brought nothing in, he can take nothing out. Yonder he is at the further end of life. Room for the leper! Let everything that hath life and beauty and hope and power of worship shrink from him! He is a leper, let him go! He is self-damned, and there is no redemption.

#### 104. The Peculiar Man.

THERE are, after all, men who cannot go in bands—men who must be complete in themselves, so far as action is concerned. Though there are some (what shall I say roughly?) hundred denominations in Christendom, and there wants a hundred and *first* just to meet some peculiar man, some odd man, who has been looking out for a church where he can sit down, and has not yet met a church with which he can unite himself. Well, well! Let him be a church by himself. He is a crooked rail, perhaps one day we may turn a corner with him.

#### 105. The Motives of Charity.

UNDERSTAND, that if any man shall give God anything in the way of having it back again, that man will be disappointed, humiliated, and justly so. It is not an investment; it is not an appeal to some greedy, crafty wretch who says, "Well, if that be the way, I shall give away a sovereign just to try if I can get two sovereigns back for it." Will you? Try it! and you will never see your sovereign again. Then you won't try it? Don't! We can't have the footsteps of such evil beasts upon the floor of God's sanctuary. It is when we give it away free from all self-consciousness in the deed, when there is no calculation

about it, when under the inspiration of love we touch the very holiness of God,—it is then that the grain of corn cast into the earth dies, germinates, fructifies, and returns a hundred-fold.

#### 106. The Danger of Selfishness.

IT is a singular thing this : That men by grasping lose ; that by scraping they get nothing ; that by having great bunches of keys to lock up seven-fold doors they can't find what they have locked away—there must be some way inside from the back—some way spirits get into it—at all events the thing goes. God has many ways of turning selfish man's very success to failure and disappointment. The darkness, the mildew, the locust, the frost, the lightning, the winds, are His servants. Thou shalt carry much seed into the field and shalt gather but little in, for the locusts shall consume it. "Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat but ye have not enough, ye drink but ye are not filled with drink, ye clothe you but there is none warm. He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put into a bag with holes." Ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight, and ye shall not be satisfied. How God mocks the bad man ! How He can turn the wicked man's very success into failure, and how out of selfish ambition He can bring the scorpion whose sting is death !

#### 107. The Man of Flippant Speech.

A MAN of flippant speech, of thoughtlessness of mind, may say, "I have asked God for *all*. Is He able to do exceeding abundantly above that ?" Yes, because no man knows what "all" means. The dewdrop has its little all. The Atlantic has its idea of all ; and the great star-laden firmament, arching over all things underneath it, has a wider representation still. A man such as I have described may say, "I have asked God for infinite blessings. Is God able to do exceeding abundantly above *infinite* ?" Yes, as you

use the word, because you don't know what infinite means. You only have your own little notion about it, and your inch cannot measure the infinitude of God. But apart from that answer, we are to protest against the doctrine that men when they come to God in prayer are to use such words as "all," "everything," "infinitude," without specification of their wants. We must tell God our necessities, interpret to Him our hunger and our thirst of soul. We must go to Him with particular, well-defined, and urgently-pleaded petitions.

#### 108. The Specific Request.

SUPPOSE that a number of petitioners should go to the legislature with a petition worded thus: "We humbly pray your honourable house to do everything for the nation, to take infinite care of it, to let the affairs of the nation tax your attention day and night, and lavish all your resources upon the people." Suppose that a petition like that should be handed into the House of Commons, what would be the fate of it? It would be laughed down, and the only reason, the only good reason, why the petitioners should not be confined to Bedlam would be, lest their insanity should alarm the inmates. That is not a petition. It is void by generality; by referring to *all* it misses everything. You must specify what you want when you go to the legislature. You must state your case with clearness of definition, and with somewhat of argument. If it be so in our social, political prayers, shall we go to Almighty God with a vagueness which means nothing, with a generality which makes no special demand upon His heart.

#### 109. Reality *v.* Shams.

IT must be always a very ticklish, delicate, and unpleasant thing to talk to snobs and shams and well-tailored mushrooms; but a noble thing to talk to a noble man, who knows what prison life is, who knows what hardness of life is, and that has some notion of how to behave himself even when the greatest personages require his attendance.

**110. Wanted a MAN !**

THERE are times when we would give half our kingdom for a *man*. A man of the right force of thought, the right capacity of sympathy, the right tone of music—that wondrous, subtle, penetrating tone which finds the ear of the soul and charms the spirit into rest and hope ! There are plenty of *men* ; but is there a *man* ? Countless populations ; but is there a seer, a man who holds upon his girdle the one key that can unlock the wards of my difficulties and can open the lock of my life ? Now there is a man who professes to answer all questions, solve all problems, dissipate all dreams, and give us a new start in life. You may have heard his name ; you may have heard it so often that it has ceased to be a name, and has become a mere sound—a wavelet on the yielding air. It is a sweet name, and yet it is possible for men to have heard it until they cease to hear it. The name is this : Jesus Christ. Have you heard it before ? A thousand times ! Yet there is not a name in the newspapers of to-day which excites you less than that name. Such may be the experience of some of you. It is a terrible thing to have outlived Christ ; to have made Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Golgotha, historic names, spectral shadows.

**111. Fearing the Invisible.**

You saw a flash of light in your bed-room last night, after you had retired to rest, and that troubled you, shook you ; you have to inquire of others in the morning to know what it was. Great man ! poor insect ! You thought you heard a voice, and yet there was nobody to be seen, and that chilled your marrow,—you drop your pen and run out into the busy streets, that you may retone your nerves. Ha ! so it was with you. You could not rest because there was an unexpected glance of light in your room. You thought somebody touched you, and when you looked behind there was no one to be seen. You had a dream which shook your whole nervous system, agitated, disturbed you, made

you unquiet and sad. Why, be a man! What was it? A shadow, an impalpability, a dream! You are a man, with your head upon your shoulders, your eyes in your head, with hands and feet, and completeness of physical constitution. Why should you be startled, chilled, afraid, by something that is mysterious, intangible, invisible? Be a man. But you can't. There is God's power over you. He can frighten you by a dream; He can startle you, confound you, by an unexpected event or combination of events.

### 112. God's Autograph.

EVERYWHERE I find the signature, the autograph of God, and He will never deny His own handwriting. God hath set His tabernacle in the dewdrop as surely as in the sun. No man can any more create the meanest polyp than he could create the greatest world.

### 113. Precedents.

WE are surrounded by instructors; we are in a great school-house; it is full of letters, lessons, illustrations, and appeals. If, then, we be found fools after all, how bitter, how terrible must be our condemnation! Blame not the savage in the lonely forest for his ignorance of letters; but the man who has had every opportunity of attaining scholarship, and after all remains in ignorance, rightly deserves the concentrated bitterness of human contempt. But beware of setting up precedents and inaugurating analogies and instituting seats of judgment; because God will gather them all together one day, and his great white throne will be the more terrible for the precedents we ourselves have perpetrated.

### 114. Religion of the Heart.

I AM delighted to tell again and again of the poor woman, who, upon being interrogated by her minister concerning formal divinity, before she could be admitted as a guest at the Lord's table, was utterly unable to answer a single question; whereupon the minister informed her that she

was not fit to be admitted to the table of the Lord. "Sir," said she, with womanly feeling and pathos, "I can't answer these questions, but I could *die* for Him." That is religion! Not answering questions only, not being able to enter into formal statements and detailed arguments, and critical disquisitions and metaphysical absurdities; but sending the heart out to receive God into its trust and its love.

#### 115. Relation of the Cross to Sin.

WHAT is our relation to this Dread Being, whose power is infinite, and whose wisdom is past finding out? We *must* sustain some relation to Him. We are the loyal subjects of His crown, or rebels in His empire. Pause, and determine the answer! Everything depends upon our relation to the Cross of Jesus Christ. Have we repented of sin—have we poured out our hearts in rivers of contrition—have we yielded our hearts in reply to the all-entreating and overwhelming argument of the Cross? You reverence God—that is not enough; you are lost in admiration of His marvellous power as shown in the courses of nature—that is not enough; you see proofs of His existence and government in every leaf of the forest—that is not enough; these things have no relation to *sin*, they do not recover our lost sonship, they leave untouched the blackest and saddest facts of our life!

#### 116. God greater than His Works.

Does not the thing made prove always to be less than the maker of it? The artist is greater than the picture; the engineer is greater than his viaduct, his tunnel, his railway, or his steam engine. The man is greater than the mere manual labourer. If it be so amongst ourselves, may we not carry the reasoning up to its religious application, and say, He who made the sun and the stars and the whole universe, what can He be but the sum of all mysteries, even God blessed for evermore!

**117. Our Dependence on God.**

THERE is a point at which we must give up and stand still, and say, "We can do no more." That is a matter of certainty in your common daily life; and out of it will come such reflections as these: I have nothing that has not upon it God's signature and God's superscription. I can work; but my work may come to nothing. I may sow my seed, but if He withhold the baptism of the dew and the rain, and the benediction of the sunlight, all my labour will come to nothingness, to mortification and pain! This must have some meaning. There must, in such a combination of circumstances as these, be a purpose which I ought to know, and understand, and work by. If a man once be started on that course of reflection, the probability is, that he who begins as a reverent inquirer, will end as a devout worshipper.

**118. Criticizing *v.* Doing.**

DON'T be criticizing the finger that points the road, and forget to take the journey. Don't say to the finger-post, "You should have been higher and broader." Go the road! That is what you have to do. The devil could have no greater joy—a grim and terrible joy is his—than to find you quarrelling with the guide, quarrelling with the index finger, and not walking one step of the road.

**119. Mercy—our only Plea.**

No man is allowed to stand before God on equal terms. No sinner is permitted to go to God and say, "I come with a case, part of which I can meet myself; I wish to discuss this thing in Thy hearing, and take Thy counsel upon it." That is not religious language. That is the language of pride, it is the language of self-sufficiency, it is the language of sin. How, then, are we to go? Not as the Pharisee went. The Pharisee went to the temple, but he found no justification there. He went to the right



place, but he went in the wrong spirit. He prayed, but his prayer was rather to himself than to God. It was an exhibition of himself in set, stiff, religious language; a prayer, in the true sense of the term, it was not, and it never entered heaven. How then are we to go? As the publican went. He went and lifted not up so much as his eyes unto heaven; he smote upon his breast; he condemned himself; he had no status in the house of God; he had no right to be there. But he came on the ground of mercy; and his beautiful prayer—which a child might store in its young heart, and the most ignorant might learn in a moment—was this: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" That man went from the temple to his house justified, forgiven, pardoned. If he had stood upon one speck of his own right; if he had laid but a finger-tip upon any one virtue he had ever exhibited; if he had said, "I make this the ground of my claim, I put this in as a right and title to Thy consideration,"—God would not have regarded his prayer. But self-renouncing, self-distrusting, hungering and thirsting after mercy and righteousness, God heard his cry, and he left the temple without the burden he took to the holy place.

### 120. Growth in Knowledge.

WHEN an infant of yours has gone to school, do you expect the little one to come back at twelve o'clock on the first day and be able to read you a chapter even out of the simplest book? When your little boy, six years of age, first looked at the arithmetic, did you expect him to come back, after two hours' teaching, and be able to reduce a certain set of fractions to a common denominator? Did you expect him, after an hour's consideration of arithmetical questions, to be able to do the most advanced rules, and to throw the book up before your face and say, "No more of your arithmetic for me, let me go into algebra at once." You did not expect that, did you? You would have said, "That boy, depend upon it, is half crazy; he does not know what he is talking about;" and you would

probably consult the most prudent adviser about the prodigy. Yet *we* want to know all about God at once, and we cannot get the information !

#### 121. The Greatness of Man.

PASCAL said, "I am greater than the sun!" How so? "I am greater than the sun." Show it. "The sun could fall and crush me; but I should be conscious of defeat, whilst the sun would be unconscious of victory!" Herein is the wondrous greatness of man. Even his failures show the mystery of his being,—he is majestic in ruin; he is all but Divine even in death!

#### 122. No Man Stronger than his Weakest Point.

REMEMBER, we are not stronger than our weakest point, and that true wisdom binds us to watch even the least gate that is insufficient or insecure.

#### 123. Effects of Fear.

WHEN men are in great physical pain, when cholera is in the air, when small-pox is killing its thousands week by week, when wheat-fields are turned into grave-yards, when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, there be many who turn their ashen faces to the heavens! What if God will not hear their cowardly prayer? When God lifts His sword, there be many that say, "We would flee from this judgment." And when He comes in the last, grand, terrible development of His personality, many will cry unto the rocks and unto the hills to hide them from His face; but the rocks and the hills will hear them not, for they will be deaf at the bidding of God!

#### 124. Experience the Best Teacher.

GOD is not, to-day, the God He was to me twenty years ago. Then I might have feared Him slavishly; then I might have had some narrow conception about His nature

and about His rule. But having had affliction, and sorrow, and disappointment, and loss; having suffered under the rod of cruelty and under the hand of bereavement, God has become to me a new God. In all His relations He is so majestic, yet so condescending: Omnipotent that He could crush, yet so gentle that He can bind up the wounds of my heart. I feel that I love Him more, and desire more to see Him, and more deeply to understand His will, and more truly to serve Him.

#### 125. God's Judgment.

THE so-called success of the bad man has yet to stand the strain of Divine trial. God will go through our money to see if it has been honestly obtained. He will search our reputation, and our hypocrisy will not be able to conceal the reality of the case from His all-seeing eye. He will examine our title-deeds, and if we have ill-gotten property, He will set the universe against us, until we restore it with penitence or have it wrenched out of our keeping by retributive misfortune. Yea, though our strength be as a mountain, it shall be wasted: though it be as a hill, it shall be blown away, and the world shall see how poorly they build who build only for the light and quietness of summer. Don't say the winter is *long* in coming; it *will* come, and *that* is the one fact which should move your concern and bring you to wisdom. In these days, when the world is in a constant panic, when men are overdriving one another, when commerce has been turned into gambling, and sharpshooters pass as honest men, it is needful that we all remind ourselves that God will judge the people righteously, and try all men by the test of His own holiness.

#### 126. Condescension of God.

GOD comes to the man who has actually taken the plunge, who has really done the evil deed, who has absolutely committed himself to the devil, who wears the very livery of

the pit, and pronounces the very language of perdition, and he says, "Come now, let us talk this matter over; let us reason together. Make this a special hour in your history; say what you will; be honest to your own judgment and to your own heart; put down your case; state your reasons and your excuses, and let us go into this case thoroughly."

**127. Cowardice.**

MANY a man, made a coward by affliction, has sought to make himself a saint through cowardice, and has turned out to be an arrant liar or a horrible hypocrite.

**128. The Chain of Many Links.**

I SAW a chain the other day in one of the public parks. I followed it as it lay upon the grass, and I found it was tethering an animal some twenty yards off. I said to myself, Which of the links holds that cow? Not the first link, nor the second, nor the third, nor the fortieth nor fiftieth. Which link is really holding that cow? Not one of the links, but all the links on the chain are doing so. And what is the chain? Only a series of links, and so links and chain, chain and links, are all doing the work. That is how it must be in business, in families, in churches, in governments, in all great confederacies of life.

**129. A Beast v. A Hero.**

THE simplest occasion of our lives may be turned to an account which it never entered into our hearts to imagine. You cannot tell where the influence of your gentle smile may end; you know not the good that may be done by the echo as well as by the voice. There is a joyful bridegroom throwing his dole into the little crowd of laughing eager boys. One of those boys is specially anxious to secure his full share of all that is thrown: he has snatched a penny, but in a moment it has been dashed out of his hand by a competitor: see how anger flushes his face, and

with what determination he strikes the successful boy: he is a savage, he is unfit to have his liberty in the public streets, his temper is uncontrollable, his covetousness is shocking: he wins the poor prize, and hastens away; watch him: with his hard-earned penny he buys a solitary orange, and with quick feet he finds his way up a rickety staircase into a barely furnished garret; he gives his orange to his poor dying sister, and the juice assuages her burning thirst. When you saw the fight, you called the boy a *beast*; but you knew not what you said!

### 130. Knowing our own Place.

IF for a moment John had supposed himself to be the Messiah, what a shock and what terrible results would have followed! Men must know their power, men must know their calling, and when a man knows his limitations it is surprising how mighty a weak man is. Keep him within his own province, bind him to his own mission, and within his proper boundaries, he is a prince and a son of God; but let him get beyond that line and he is captured as an intruder or is slain as a spy. Let us know what is meant by our position as pioneers. If the frame-maker should ever take it into his head that he is the artist, what an anti-climax would be perpetrated! If April should ever take it into its head that it can do the work of August, what a block there would be in the process of the year.

### 131. Contentment.

ARE you labouring in a village and does it ever enter into your head that you would like to labour in London? You had better not, you had better not entertain that notion, it hath driven some men almost crazy, and it is a very perilous thing to play with—a notion of that kind, that a man is adapted to Metropolitan life when probably he is adapted to nothing of the sort. “To fill up the sphere we have” should be our duty and our joy. “It is only a nutshell.” Well then it will take less filling. “It is only

a little village." Well then you will make your work the more manifest and the more speedy. I do not say that every man is to abide just where he is. Nothing of the kind; but whilst he is there, he is bound by every consideration that can stir a true man's heart and strength to make the very best of his position.

### 132. Progressiveness.

THE question which may be fairly put about the Bible and about all life, all ministries and all churches, is this, "What of their progressiveness?" If a man is the same to-day that he was twenty years ago, he is growing downwards, and is really not the same man that he was twenty years ago. A man must be double the man he was twenty years ago or there is something wrong in him. If you say he preaches exactly as he did a quarter of a century since, then he was a poor preacher to begin with and he has become worse and worse as the years have rolled away. Now I fasten this inquiry upon the book of God, and I will stake great results upon it. What of its progressiveness? How did Divine revelation begin? How has it proceeded? How did it culminate? Is the culmination of the Divine truth of the same nature and quality as the beginning, or is there disjunction, is there vital separation? And everything will depend upon the answer that can be returned to these inquiries.

### 133. Prayer the Means of Increase.

If God has given such wisdom to insects, how much more will He give to men? They can't ask for any more; we are urged to speak to Him to give us further supplies. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not." What! will He make a wise insect, and forget the child fashioned in His own image—Imperial, Divine—after His own likeness? Then if we are not wise, whose blame is it? It is not God's blame. He waits to communicate, He loves to give.

An ungiving God! That would be a monstrosity of paganism,—a degradation of mythology itself. We are called to asking, to prayer, to supplication, to pleading, that the volume of our being may be increased, that our spiritual graces may be multiplied, and that all that is Divine in us may be enhanced and confirmed. No man can be wise without this union with God. He may have swallowed whole libraries—he may be a *helluo librorum*, but he is not wise. If God commends so distinctly the right use of intellect, how bitterly will He complain of the abuse of reason!

### 134. Everything Obedient but Man.

Men are sent to the ants to learn diligence. They are sent to the conies to learn that there is a way which terminates in a great rock. They are sent to the locusts to learn how little, when combined, may become mighty, sufficient for all the duty and obligation of the day. What if it be found at the last that all the lower orders and ranks of creation have been obedient, dutiful, loyal,—and that the child only has wounded the great heart? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." God has had no trouble with His creatures—no trouble with His great constellations—they never mutinied against Him; He has had no trouble with His forests—no rebel host ever banded themselves there. Where has His sorrow lain? His own child, His beloved one, in whom He has written in fairest lines the perfectness of His own beauty, that child has lifted up his puny fist and smitten Him, not in the face only, but on His heart of love, which only can be forgiven by the shedding of sacrificial blood.

### 135. Necessity of the Gospel.

No more can you do without the Gospel than you can do without the influences of nature in the lower ranges of your life. The Gospel of the blessed God claims to be as necessary to the redemption and sanctification and glorification

of the soul as the sun, the air, the dew, the earth claim to be necessary to the growth of your food and to the maintenance of your physical system.

### 136. Living Backward.

No man is at liberty to live backwards. If the prophets underwent misjudgment and torment by reason of having to live in the future, what shall be said of those poor ricketty creatures who are always trying to go back into the dim past, to exhume the prophets, and to live three or four centuries behind their privileges?

### 137. Pardon and Holiness.

PARDON is not enough. Pardon seems merely to restore us to a kind of negative condition. Pardon may mean, in some cases, where not fully understood and realized, mere innocence. There was a stain upon the heart: that stain has been removed by a powerful detergent, and now the heart is pretty much as it was in years gone by. That may be some people's notion of pardon. But when God pardons there is another step involved, and another element enters into consideration. Man becomes not only pardoned,—he becomes also holy. Holiness is more than innocence. Holiness denotes vitality of sympathy as between the soul and God. Holiness is the comprehensive word which includes the whole discipline of life, the whole trust of the heart in God, and the continuous aspiration of the spirit after the perfectness of God's own beauty.

### 138. Discipline.

HERE is a little kingdom, which we shall characterize as the kingdom of merely muscular competition. Men are going to try muscular force with their fellow-men,—they are going to have a boat race. You and I cannot walk along the river-side and instantly take into our heads the notion that we will have a spin with these men and beat them all. That can't be done. Strait is the gate and narrow is the



way that leads even to athletic supremacy. The men are going into training; they are going to put themselves under tutors and governors; they are going to submit to a bill of fare and a course of discipline which you and I would take to very unkindly. But why are they going to do so? Because they have determined to take a higher seat in the kingdom of mere athletic exercise and enjoyment. Now it is a very strange thing that you, a man fourteen stones weight, cannot just get into the very first boat that comes in your way and outstrip the men who have been in drill and training and exercise for the last three months. But you cannot do so. As a mere matter of fact, a man who has been drilled, disciplined, exercised, will beat you, except a miracle be wrought for your advantage.

### 139. Value of a Moment.

SUMMER is quickly going with some of you, yet learn, that if one moment remains a great deal may be done in it. It is marvellous how the very greatest things we read of have been done, as it were, instantaneously.

### 140. Loving the Brethren.

THE apostle says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." Pause a moment, then, and let us try to find out the reason. Because we feel very comfortable in our hearts, because we like to sit very closely to the fire and read a favourite author, because we have occasional gushings of very tender feeling, is that how we know we have passed from death unto life? The apostle says, No. His argument is this:—We *know*—the same word that I have in the text, Jesus *knowing*—that we have passed from death unto life *because we love the brethren*. Alas, sirs! there is this danger about our religious life to-day: We think, when we get hold of a favourite book, and repeat certain familiar hymns, and look upon ourselves in relation to the social blessings with which God has gifted us, that we are doing everything that is needful to show our relationship, to prove our redemption by Christ.

## 141. — Worth of an "Idea."

A MAN will charge you a penny for so much *tape*; but if that man were to give you an *idea*, and say, "Now, I want a penny for that," you would smile at him, and say the thing was absurd and preposterous. Tape! Now, tape can be felt and looked at,—that is worth something. But an *idea*, a hint, a scheme, a fancy, a scintillation of genius, a suggestion,—to give anything for *that* seems utterly absurd and preposterous. Yet its price may be far above rubies! I am afraid some people think so, and therefore don't attempt anything in the form of compensation.

## 142. "I."

THERE is a humility that is very oppressive. I heard a person say, for example, "I delivered an address at the laying of a foundation-stone; and from beginning to end I never used the word *I*." To know that he never used it was to use it. The speech was, from beginning to end, one long *I*, and nothing else.

## 143. Leaders.

WE need a man, here and there, to lead the world's singing. How many people there are who could not, for their lives, raise a tune, but who would not for a good deal refrain from joining the singing! You are not a leader; but you will have a hum in at least: and you are quite right. But the world needs leaders. Hence the psalmist rose amongst us this morning and said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And our hearts went out after Him,—not in his high key, not in his loud, clear, trumpet tones,—but our hearts went out after him. We said, "That is a right song; and if we cannot reach the lightning-notes, we shall still rumble and mutter among the thunder-bass!"

## 144. Consolation alone in the Cross.

THERE are parts of our life we do not like to think about. When we are suddenly reminded of them we call, Wine!

We turn aside a little to some one and say, Play something. There is a time when wine and music shall have lost their power of enchantment, and we shall be turned right round—forced to look at the past! Oh, sirs! it is then that we shall have no little quibbling, wretched questions to put about Christ's Cross and Christ's atonement. When we see life from that point, and feel the bitterness and torment of sin, we shall then know that the Lamb of God never shed one drop too much of His blood, never suffered one pang too many for the sins of the world. We shall not be critics then, pedants then, little technical inquirers then. We shall feel that the Cross, and that alone, can go right into our life, with the answer to our difficulties, and the balm for our wound and sorrow.

#### 145. Carrying other People's Troubles.

WE carry other people's troubles very easily. It is possible to say that though fig-trees may not blossom our religion shall not be touched, simply because we have no investment in fig-trees. Understand that? The great point is this: "Although *my* fig-tree shall not blossom, although no fruit shall be in my vines, although the labour of my olive shall fail, and my fields yield no meat, and my flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in my stalls, though my fig-tree be barked, though my one ewe lamb be taken away from me, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." It does us good to speak in that high key sometimes, because it shows us that our education is yet far from completeness. We see how poor is their religion which is dependent upon the external. It is not a religion at all. It is a theory, it is a sentiment, it is a kind of natural instinct. But religion—deep, true, wise, tender—is not in it.

#### 146. Preparing for the Future.

THERE is one thing for which men ought to find time, and that is to prepare for the future. Do you say you have not

time? How then are you spending your time? In business, in strife after position, trying to get daily bread honestly. Well, all this up to a given point is perfectly right, perfectly defensible. But see! You had better set fire to your shop,—you had better go without bread,—you had better hide your nakedness in some distant retreat where man could never find you,—than lose the opportunity of knowing spiritual and rectifying spiritual relations, of knowing God, laying hold upon Him and following hard after Him. The life is more than meat. If anything is to be saved out of the fire, it is not the decoration, the luxury, the toy,—it is the child! The life first, and then if you can get anything afterwards by all means get it; but do in the name of your own common sense be as reasonable and as sensible in spiritual things as you are in things that are temporal.

#### 147. Significance of One Word.

IT is wonderful what creative force there is in one word, what determining might there is in one resolution, how in one moment a man may change the current of his life and the point of his destiny. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." It is a point of time,—it is one effort of the heart,—it is one gasp of the soul, and then—What? Eternity! Heaven! There may have been long processes, but the climacteric deed is often expressed by a word.

#### 148. Neglect of the One Thing Needful.

LET the eloquent man be judged, the man who has made the uses of speech his study from his earliest days. Hear his statement, but fail to follow his example: "I copied with my own hands six times the most voluminous histories of my country, that I might attain to what I supposed were the excellencies of their style. I disqualified myself for appearing in ordinary society by disfiguring my personal appearance, in order that I might bind myself to study by

day and practice of speech by night. I have put pebbles in my mouth to cure my stammering; I have run up the steepest hills in the country that I might strengthen my lungs; I have harangued the sea that I might obtain power over tumultuous elements; if you would follow me along the road, walk it as I have done, inch by inch." And he has never thought about God's kingdom—kingdom of light, and life, and truth, and beauty. Hear God! "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest, thou didst understand all about care and pains and discipline and culture, thou oughtest therefore—" And the man has no answer. No man can answer God when he comes face to face with his Maker! He may chaffer with Him now; he may utter his little speeches against his Maker now. But when it comes to the last reckoning of all, when a man takes up his life in his hand and says, "This is what I have done," God will point out to the man in his own life the things which will damn and consume him!

#### 149. Necessary Madness.

THERE is a *madness* without which the world could not live; a species of enthusiasm, glowing life, without which the world would be poor, worthless.

#### 150. The Strait Gate.

THERE was a man—a lean, cold, spectral man—never sunny, genial, poetical, for a day in his life: skin and bone—skin and bone. And they called him a Pharisee. He stood in all his erect leanness, and said how often he fasted, what tithes he paid, and what an excellent man he was. Jesus Christ said, "Well, you cannot go in at this gate. You will have to lay down and trample under foot all that fasting and tithe-paying, all that excellent virtue, for 'Strait is the gate.'" A man has to lay down a great deal before he can get through this gate. He has to take a great many idols out of his pockets and throw them away; then to go through the chambers of his mind and take out

theory after theory, by the hundred, and blow them away. Ha! Except ye be converted and become as little children—simple-minded, gentle, pure, loving, trustful children,—ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Great, tall men, who believe in themselves—who are afraid they will knock their heads against the stars if they stand right up—cannot, cannot get in. The gate truly is strait and the way narrow!

#### 151. Encouragement.

It is an awkward expression is that,—anything being “far above rubies;” because we may sometimes take refuge in exaggeration, and think that impossibility absolves from all attempts. I speak, therefore, a word inspiring, cheering, strengthening to you young men who have to burn the lamp far into the night,—to you men who have to think and scheme and plan in your business,—to you who apparently do nothing in the world, and yet do everything in your sphere, by the anxiety of your thinking, and by the constancy of your endeavour to arrange and plan so that all your thousand points may be brought together and focalized into an honourable success.

#### 152. Salvation interpreted by the Cross.

THE word salvation is a heart-word: the interpretation of it is on yonder Cross—the Cross of Christ. You must learn it there, you must sound its depths there, you must try to find the measure of its infinite amplitude there, in the work of God the Son!

#### 153. Death—the one Solemn Rendezvous.

WE are all hastening to one meeting-place. You who are on the mountain-top yonder, golden with the light of the morning; you who are in the dark, dank, wet valley, where the trees are dripping and the road is steep; you who are walking though garden land, beautiful and flowery and fragrant; you who are knee-deep in snow, or are going

through the arid burning desert sand;—we shall all come face to face at one solemn rendezvous! Are we prepared for that death? We cannot escape it. I know you are young and strong and stalwart, and defiant in many a mood. But, sir, death will have you! He will blanch your ruddy cheek, extinguish the fire of your eye, and say to the heart, Stand still!

#### 154. Government—A Plan.

THERE are no unexpected thoughts in the mind of God. The changes that are strange and startling to us are links in the chain of God's own fashioning. Lay hold of this, and you escape the atheism of chance, and come into the peaceful religion of familiar trust. Therefore, in proportion as I think of God's government *as a plan* am I at rest. In proportion as I take it to pieces and discuss it in detail am I vexed, and troubled, and disappointed. When I think of God building a great temple, I say, "Give Him time till He brings the topstone on, and says it is finished. And be careful, too, lest you mistake the scaffolding for the temple." God often requires, as it were, laborious scaffolding; and when I come to look at His unfinished temple and see nothing but these great beams, and posts, and planks, I say, "There is no temple here, there is nothing but confusion;" but God says to me "*Wait, wait.*" And I come back and back; and when I return on the last day to look at it, all the scaffolding is gone. Then shall I find the floor laid with fine gold, and the roof lighted with such beauty as was never painted by the brush of the artist.

#### 155. The Mountain and the Valley.

WE cannot be always on the mountain-top, away from the putrid life and evil influence of society; we must go down where man is lying in his guilt and in his weakness, and raise him up, and invite him to return to his Father.

**156. Christian Unity.**

TAKE the Church, and deal with it in its general sections, and what have we? What unity of belief we have in all the highest questions in theology; speaking generally, speaking almost universally, we believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; we believe in the sinfulness of men; we believe that the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is God's answer to the great difficulty of sin; we believe that there is no way to the Father or to Heaven but through Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world; we believe that the work of regeneration and sanctification is to be done by God the Holy Ghost; and I contend that being one upon such points as these, any little differences that may arise, or any comparatively great diversities of opinion that may be developed, should not keep us back from that hearty, intelligent, loving unity, which after all is the grandest exhibition of Christian life which the world can understand, and which society can feel.

**157. Taught of God.**

WE may not be great in critical exposition; we may know little or nothing of the syntax of the New Testament; we may be contemned by grammarians and linguists, yet may we be able, by the power of the Holy Ghost, so to live as to throw an explaining lustre upon hidden passages and difficult expressions.

**158. Oneness of Christians.**

I CARE but very little about the nominal unification of Christendom. There is something deeper than mere names. I believe that in the deepest sense all Christians are one, and that in the deepest sense the Church of Jesus Christ is indivisible. We are not one after the pattern of a brick wall; we are one as the rainbow is one; we are many regiments, but one army; we are many counties, but



one empire ; we are distinct as the waves, yet one as the sea ; lonely as the stars, but one as the firmament ; we are diversified as the mountains, but one as the globe.

#### 159. God's By-ways.

WE often vex God, when He comes to us by unwonted ways. Though He has come to us through the pathway of a thousand storms, yet we still tremble before the gathering gloom, as if God had forgotten to be gracious. Though He has come to us with the wings of many a fire, we have still dreaded the flame, as if it tabernacled no God. Have you thought about that department of your sin ? I have thought of it many a time. We will not let God have any *extraordinary* methods of manifestation to us. We will have yesterday repeated to-day, and to-day is to be the image and prophecy of the morrow. And yet God will not have it so. He will come to us, not always by the great grand staircase of His daily Providence, when we can see Him as it were descending in all the pomp of His Infiniteness, but He will come to us along passages, and down by-lanes, and will start up before us suddenly and unexpectedly ; and it is then we become so weak as oftentimes to grieve Him, as if He had not ten thousand ways into His universe beside the one way that we speak of as His peculiar path.

#### 160. Genius without Grace.

A MAN is not to be judged by the poverty of his words, but by the moral power of his life. The simplicity of his motives, the nobleness of his temper, the purity of his conversation, his forbearance, gentleness, catholicity, self-denial, *these* are the convincing signs that in his heart are set the pillars of God's throne. On the other hand, there may be splendid genius, exquisite skill in debate, language the most chaste and powerful, wit that wins a battle with a sentence, sarcasm that clears its way with a tongue of fire, and yet there may be no grace in the heart, the soul

may not know the voice of God, the life may not respond to the power of truth ; there will be simply genius without grace—that is, a lamp in a graveyard, or a crown on the brow of the dead !

### 161. The "High Church."

ARE you members of the *High Church* ? So am I. I believe in a High Church with all my heart. We may have different methods of measuring height ; we may not all apply the same rule ; we may have different lengths, different standards ; but if you ask me if I am a member of the High Church, I say "Yes, and hope evermore to be." The Church never can be too high ; "Ye are a city set on a hill which cannot be hid"—high in all that is pure in doctrine, consistent in life, noble in spirit, high in Scriptural testimony, high in moral courage on behalf of all that is considered to be for the elevation of down-trodden human nature, and the vindication of divinely-revealed truths.

### 162. Christ's going away Expedient.

HERE is a father sending his boy to school, and there is such a dreary night before he must go. The father and the mother half think they may never see him again. He has never been out of their sight for twenty-four hours, and now they are going to send him away to a distant school, and the mother hardly sleeps all night, and the father gets up at an unusually early hour, and altogether there is a general sense of a sort of domestic earthquake in the house, because the youth is going to be sent to school. Now, why all this discomfort ? Why do not they keep him at home ? Why do not they keep him constantly in their sight ? They say it is expedient for him that our presence be withdrawn ; it is expedient that he escape the temptations of home ; it is expedient for him that he undergo drill and discipline ; it is expedient for him that he meet his equals in the great scholarly contest ; *it is expedient for him*, and on that principle the father strengthens himself, and the mother makes

herself a strong woman, and they bid him good-bye, not with delight, and yet with a secret comforting conviction that it is for the youth's good that he undergo this separation. So then we know something of this—we know something of trial in this direction; and this kind of trial reaches the perfection of its meaning in Jesus Christ's separation from His Church.

**163. Age Tested by Work.**

It is quite possible to die young, and yet to be very old. In the epitaph men number the years; but in the heart God sets down the measure of the work. Some men will live more in one day than other men will live in a week. Some men will live to old age, and yet die as infants who have done nothing.

**164. Influence of the Holy Ghost on the Preacher.**

It is possible that from the poorest words there may be poured an irresistible, all-convincing, and all-blessing life, as from the bush in Horeb there flamed a glory not of earth, and from the raiment of the transfigured Nazarene there shone a brightness more splendid than the fire of the sun. The Apostle gives us some such idea of His own preaching when He says, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power."

**165. Christ's Perpetual Presence.**

My friend has gone away from me over the sea and beyond the mountain, but I have him in my heart; his thoughts, his views of life, his behaviour under given circumstances, his noble impatience, magnanimous scorn of all that is low and mean, never leave me; they will mould my life, they will save me in many a temptation. He is with me always because of the realizing power of love. And this that we know something about in friendship, in the family circle, in literature, reaches its highest consummation in Jesus

Christ ; for though He has gone away from us, He says, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Though we cannot see Him, yet He says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Though we would gladly lay hold of His wounded hand, He says it is better not. It is expedient for you that fleshly contact cease, and that you lay hold of Him by the tendrils of your love. For what if we did grasp hands, Death would break up our union ; but if we grasp hearts, we are one for ever.

#### 166. What is Heaven ?

**MAKE** your desk an altar ; turn your business into a means of grace ; let your counting-house be a sanctuary ; and then heaven will be but the natural climax of your Christian progress.

#### 167. Strength in Weakness.

No teacher of the Gospel is warranted in being indolent, and in defending his indolence by the plea that the kingdom of God does not depend upon his word, but upon its own power. We are to do the best for that kingdom which it is within the compass of our ability to render, as if everything depended upon our personal energy ; and having done so, though the result may be, in the estimation of the world, weak, and even contemptible, yet it is in such weakness that God magnifies His own strength.

#### 168. The Church Secure.

**THE Church** will not fail : our little *sects* may change a good deal ; our little denominational huts may be considerably overthrown ; but God's Church, which God himself has been purposing from eternity to set up in the universe—God's Church, that rests on Christ's person and Christ's work, and that is animated by the Holy Ghost—will never fail.

#### 169. Liberality.

**I KNOW** of two men who started business with this vow :—"We shall give to God one-tenth of all our profits."

The first year the profits were considerable ; the tithe was consequently considerable. The next year there was increase in the profits and of course increase in the tithe ; in a few years the profits became very, very large indeed, so that the partners said to one another, "Is not a tenth of this rather too much to give away ? suppose we say now we shall give a twentieth ?" And they gave a twentieth, —and the next year the profits had fallen down ; the year after that they fell down again, and the men said to one another as Christians should say in such a case, "Have not we broken our vow ? Have we not robbed God ?" And in no spirit of selfish calculation, but with humility of soul, self-reproach and bitter contrition, they went back to God and told him how the matter stood, prayed His forgiveness, renewed their vow, and God opened the windows of Heaven and came back to them and all the old prosperity.

**170. "Thy Will be Done."**

BUT is there not a limit ? Yes, there is a limit, and it is sometimes well not to look at it in the light of a limit. It is true that we are shut up like the sea and watched like the whale, but that is no reason why we should shrivel into a pool or dwindle into a minnow. What is the limit of our prayer ? This. Not my will but Thine be done ! Is that a limit ? Why, that is glorious liberty ! Not my will but Thine,—not a little will but a great will,—not my thought but Thine, not my love but Thine ! Is it a limit ? It is the lark rising from its field-nest into the boundless liberty of the firmament ! Truly we do not limit ourselves when we exchange the creature for the Creator. When we take up our little thought and say, "Lord, this is what we want,—but not our will but Thine be done," do we then throw away the greater for the less ? It is a contrast, and only such a contrast as you find in the earth and heaven, in the blazing sun and the misty night.

**171. Little Things.**

WHO are we—happily situated, having little or nothing to interrupt our domestic joy—that we should in an off-handed

manner exhort people to be more patient, and to be this and that and the other, when we ourselves could not be so if we were under the same circumstances? Understand, it is these little, insignificant things that destroy the happiness of a human home. Not great fights, not periodical revolutions in the domestic state; but nasty little words, untimely shruggings of the shoulder, and sneers that are no sooner on the lip than away.

### 172. Effect of Beholding the Glory of God.

Now and again we are permitted to see with startling vividness the Hand which rules, and in which is the rod of power. Now and again God puts aside all ministries and mediations, and shows us all the glory of His personal presence and all the wonderfulness of His irresistible power. We are glad when He retires, for no man can see God and live. Better to have the ministry of the most inexorable, faithful prophet, who never spares the word of judgment or the stroke of the rod, than stand in the unclouded and blinding blaze of the Divine glory.

### 73. Christian Discipline.

WHEN a man who professes to know Christ is found drunk in the streets, we expel him from the Church, and call that discipline; when a man is convicted of some heinous crime, we cut him off from the fellowship of the Church, and call that the discipline of Christian fellowship. It is nothing of the kind; that is mere decency. There is not a club in the world that cares one iota for its own respectability that would not do the same thing. Ours is to be *Christian* discipline. When Christian discipline comes to play amongst the priests and the professors of Christ, then the covetous man shall be blown away by a whirlwind of righteous indignation; and the man who spoke but one unkind word shall be seen to be a murderer, and shall be driven from the circle of God's people! Who then can stand? Where are Christians, if such be the rule? If an

unholy thought be lust,—if the turn of an eye may be practical blasphemy,—if the momentary entertainment of an evil thought, the flash of an evil passion,—if that be held before God to be crime incipient, crime in the germ, crime in reality, who then can stand?

**174. The "Man of God."**

You need not have "a man of God" described, ticketed, and detailed. When a man of God confronts you, he brings with him atmosphere and light and moral credentials which instantly show that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him!

**175. An Engagement for the Day of Trouble.**

TAKE out your memorandum-books if you please, because I intend to make an engagement for you. But stay! you need not take out your diary, because I know you have no engagement for the day which I am going to mention. You need not look, because I know there is a vacant line, and you can fill up that line now. How do I know that there is a vacancy in that part of your diary? Because all history tells me that it is so. It is impossible for me to be mistaken in this matter. So you need not look into your memorandum-book, because there is a vacant place there which I now want to fill up. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." Now you have no engagement for the day of trouble! You have not. Your friends don't want to see you in the day of trouble. They don't want to open the door to a man who has a burden upon his back. They say, "Call upon us in the summer-time, call upon us when thou art garlanded with blossoms; call upon us when thy hands are laden with fruit; come when fortune is propitious, when the winds are southerly, when there is blue sky overhead." But you have no engagement for the day of trouble. God therefore comes and asks that that day may be His.

**176. Faith.**

IT is very well for you to go into your house where your children are all strong, healthy, and boisterous, full of life and vigour all the day long, and for you to praise God. But here is a man whose income is small; whose children are puny, weak, hardly ever have a day's health. For that man to look upon his lot and say, "It seems to be very hard: all these things are apparently against me, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." That is faith!

**177. Patient Toiling.**

HERE is a man who wishes to excel in authorship. You read his book. You don't see all that lies behind the book. You don't see the rough outline which he first sketched,—writing off-hand, as it were,—on, and on, and on,—blotting, and interlining, and erasing. There it is; just a rough manuscript, with hardly any shape,—a line of thought running through it which he alone can see. He lays it aside and takes up another sheet; brings then the rough draft, writes over many parts with care, compression, condensation, that he may give it point and pertinence. He burns the first draft; lays the second aside, lays it by for six months, until he has become another man, viz. a critic of his own productions. He takes up his manuscript again for the last time,—goes through it, striking out everything that is opposed to taste, inserting, improving, refining, curving, enriching, and expending himself upon it. Ask why? He says, "I mean this book to live after I have been taken away. I mean this to be a testimony. I mean this to be the last, richest, best expression of my attainments and my convictions; therefore I have expended myself fully upon its preparation." What is it that is written over the man's study and over the man's desk? This: "Strait is the gate, narrow is the way." No doubt there are men who can write beautiful nothings by the mile, sell them in the morning, and have them forgotten at



sundown. But the writers who wish to enrich all coming generations, to stimulate the most distant posterity, have not the knack of shaking out of their coat-sleeves the standard literature of the country. It is a question of preparation, self-culture, self-control, and putting out the stress of the whole being upon it.

**178. An Unpaid Vow.**

PRAISE should always follow answered prayer. It was thus with one man. He was very ill; a great strong man in his day; yet disease touched him, shrivelled him up, laid him upon a lowly bed, made him pray to the humblest creature in his house for favours hour after hour. As he lay there, in his lowliness and weakness, he said, "If God would raise me up I would be a new man, I would be a devout worshipper in the sanctuary, I would live to His glory." And God gathered him up again; did not break the bruised reed, did not quench the smoking flax, but permitted the man to regain his faculties. And he was not well one month till he became as worldly as he was before his affliction. He prayed as if his heart loved God; and when he got his health back again he was a practical atheist—he was virtually the basest of blasphemers.

**179. "The Glory that Excelleth."**

ONE day we shall recollect the sun as a poor pale little beam that we could just manage to do with, by using our eyes very sharply and putting our hands before us lest we should fall over something. One day we shall think of our professed sanctification as a poor morality.

**180. Wider Sympathies.**

Do you know that there is a world larger than mere England? that over that little thimbleful of water, which you call the sea, there are other countries? It is a difficult thing for an Englishman to believe that there is any other land,—very difficult for an islander to believe in a continent.

But really there are other places besides England, I am told. Are there no other places than the world which we call "the great globe itself"? There may be. Why then should we be compressing ourselves, minifying ourselves, and getting into the most microscopic compass? Why not pray for larger life, larger intellectual dominion, higher, sublimer moral sympathies? Why not, having infinitude around us, set ourselves as if we meant to take in as guest and king the whole God?

### **181. Grace All in All.**

GIFTS are no substitute for grace. Better be the poorest, slowest, dullest thinker; better be a man of stammering tongue, than be the most brilliant and gifted man who does not know what it is to be under the power of Divine grace. Holiness, then, is the fundamental requirement in all persons who would interpret God and serve Him in any department of the great ministry of His kingdom.

### **182. The Form without the Power.**

IT is possible for a man to have a pulpit, and to have no God; to have a Bible, and no Holy Ghost; to be employing his lips in uttering the eloquence of truth, when his heart has gone astray from all that is true and beautiful and good; at the very moment his lips are fired by the words that ought to have converted himself, his heart is not in his work, it is wandering far off yonder, buying and selling and getting gain, sucking in poison where it ought to have extracted honey, making the word of God of none effect, and causing the people to blaspheme and alienate themselves from God!

### **183. Unqualified Men—Or True Leadership.**

IN the long run leadership resolves itself into a question of personal qualification. For a time men may arise who claim commanding positions who are unable to discharge the duties which their ambition has coveted. In such

instances there would seem to be a miscarriage of the natural law and order of things; yet it is only temporary; sooner or later unqualified men have to resign positions which they ought never to have assumed.

#### 184. Which—Up or Down?

“SHALL we go down to them, or shall they come up to us?” I will say one word about that; it is a subject to which I revert again and again, because as the subject is always there, the answer ought often to be forthcoming. If any man who professes the name of Christ can say, “Shall I go down to these people, or shall these people come up to me?” I say, you have taken Christ’s name, but you have left behind Christ’s spirit. Go down? Yes, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Yes; He who bore the image of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and whilst He did that, who are *we*, with our yesterday’s ancestry, with our mushroom dignity, with our hateful selfishness, that we should turn aside in cold, frosted, awful respectability, and say “Shall *we* go down?” There is only one reason why we should not go down, and that is, if we can ask such a question, because there is no lower depth to which we can descend. He who is most in Christ will be deepest in the religion of His service, and there shall be found no lowness in Christian work that is not consistent with the purest and Divinest dignity.

#### 185. A Conclusive Answer.

LET any attack be made upon the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and from what quarter does the reply come? It never comes from *any one quarter*. Let an heretical book be written that requires a reply, and who writes the book? The book is not written by any particular section of the Church. The Episcopalian is ready with his answer; so is

the Independent; the Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Wesleyan, they are, too, ready with their answers, and the answers are not many, *but one*. And I find in this instantaneous and complete reply to every attack that has yet been made upon the Christian—I find in this reply, coming not from *one* quarter, or from *two*, but from *all* quarters, a noble and sensible answer to the charge that Jesus Christ's Church is divided, and there is no cohesion amongst its atoms.

#### 186. Inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

BLESSED are they who never wish to be higher than the truth, and who despise all the fascinations of form in comparison with the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

#### 187. Character.

CHARACTER ought not to be a mere question of *points* at all. Character ought not to be viewed in sections and departments, in aspects and occasional moods. Character should have about it the distinctness of wholeness, entirety. Our goodness is not to be an occasional impulse or a transitory appearance of moral conscience and moral concern for others. Out of our character there is to stream continuous and beneficent influence. We lose when we can be talked about in sections. It is no compliment when we have to take out of a character three or four good points and say to those who look on, "Observe these; whatever defects there may be in the character, don't overlook these redeeming points." When we can talk so about ourselves and about others, it is not a compliment, it is a sign of incompleteness. When our moral training is perfected we shall not have points of excellence; our whole character shall be massive, indivisible, and out of it shall go an influence that shall constrain men to believe that we have been with God, and that we have imbibed the very spirit of His righteousness.

**188. Forgiveness.**

WHEN we are merciful to those who have done us wrong; when we forgive our brethren seven times a day, and then are willing to forgive them seventy times seven; when we do not forgive as if we were punishing the offender; when we rise so far as we may be able to into the mystery of Divine pardon, then shall men remember that it is written, "Forgive ye every one his brother his trespasses."

**189. Self-Reliance.**

HERE is a mother who is teaching her little child to walk. You know what a pleasure it is to see a little creature taking its first walk from one chair to another? I do not think I shall ever forget the first time I taught a little child to walk, and the joy I had in seeing the little toddling creature manage to go three steps without my help. There came to me a sense of triumph, a sense of something done. Well, here is a mother teaching her child to walk from one chair to another, and she begins by holding the child's waist gently with both hands, and as the little thing steadies itself, and seems to have found its feet, she just takes away her hands little by little. Why does she take away her hands? Does she say, "I am tired; I do not like this posture of embracing thee, or of holding thee"? No, but she says in effect, "It is expedient for thee, my little child, that I take away this motherly support; thou must learn to walk by thyself;" and so the hands go away, not because the mother is weary, but because the child must be taught, sooner or later, self-reliance.

**190. The Regenerate Man.**

THE regenerated man is known by the spirit which animates his life, for it is the motive which gives quality to character; the regenerated man lives by rule, but it is the unwritten and unchanging rule of love; the regenerated man advances in orderliness, but it is the orderliness, not of mechanical

stipulation, but of vigorous and affluent life; the regenerated man is constantly strengthened and ennobled by an inextinguishable ambition to be filled with all fulness of Christ—his new life springs up for ever as a well of water that cannot be exhausted.

### 191. Narrow Churches.

I DO dislike narrow churches; I do dislike little, *little* self-enclosing, self-subsisting clubs of so-called Christian professors. I find nothing narrow in Christianity. I find Christianity the broadest system, either of religion, or of thought, or of philanthropy, that I can find in the world. If there are persons that wrap their little sectarian garments about them, and say, "We are the people of God, and there is no other people that belong to Him," then are they liars, and the truth is not in them. Little people that live in a nutshell, which they mistake for the universe, that have their own little Bethel, and their own little hymn-book, and their own little sectarian movements, and their own little heaven, I do not know anything about them, except that, having heard about them, I do not wish to prosecute inquiry further. If there are such people—no, I would not alter that grammar, and say if there *be* such people, hoping that their existence is quite contingent and future—if there *be* such people, they know nothing about the Divine, catholic, universal liberty of Jesus Christ's teaching. I trust that we all belong to the Broad Church, that we hail a brother, whatsoever be the temporary name by which he is known in ecclesiastical life; and that we allow heart to speak to heart, and know something of the free intercourse of brotherly unity in Christ Jesus.

### 192. True Charity.

WHEN we are so devoted to works of charity and philanthropy as to think nothing of ourselves; when we seek out the poor, that we may comfort them; when we go after the ignorant, carrying to them the lamp of knowledge;

when we speak to the hopeless the word of encouragement ; when we plan much and work heartily for the restoration of sinners, then shall men remember that it is written, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

### 193. Charity.

CHARITY ceases to be charitable when it ceases to be just. Charity is not distrust of truth : it is truth spoken with gentleness.

### 194. Consecration.

THERE is a great deal of talk about men killing themselves in God's service, but such homicide is rarely known as a fact. If those who work under the fear of killing themselves for God were to die, there would be a considerable vacancy in society, yet not much subtraction from the service that is really rendered to the world. I would urge myself to ever-increasing consecration, and I would pray those who wait on my ministry to work every hour of the day, sorry only that the day is so short for work so noble, so Divine. We may truly say of Christianity—

"On such a theme 'twere impious to be calm,  
Passion is reason, transport temper, here."

### 195. Church—in the Heart.

- A CHURCH can only come out of the heart. So, if you have been training yourselves only by the intellect, I do not wonder at your being a poor and shrivelled Church. I never find a Church that takes hold of the head alone going forward, I find it progressing backwards ; and I thank God that I see it shrivelling out of existence. But in a Church whose fundamental principle is this, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," I find humanity, tenderness, nobleness, benevolence, and Divinity.

### 196. Living the Bible.

WE must *live ourselves* into the meaning of some passages. You know what I mean by *living* ourselves into expositions

of the Holy Word. Sometimes, through our love, we come to understand references which before had been quite inexplicable; sometimes, in the darkest hours of bodily suffering, when every stay seems to fail us, when our dearest friends are compelled to stand afar off, trembling and weeping because of their helplessness, we come to have revelations of the meaning of hard words, of which we could make nothing in the time of our strength and prosperity; sometimes, in the long-continued exercise of patience, when we think we must give up, when heart and flesh seem to fail, when our most cherished desire is fading out, we have been brought through our own endurance to know a little of the long-suffering of our Father, then have we remembered what was written of Him and His wonderful ways.

#### **197. God's Methods of Punishment.**

GOD is not confined to one method of punishment. He touches a man's bones, and they melt; He breathes upon a man's brain, and henceforth he is not able to think. He comes in at night-time, and shakes the foundations of man's most trusted towers, and in the morning there is nought but a heap of ruins. He disorganizes men's memories, and in an instant they confuse all the recollections of their lifetime. He touches man's tongue, and the fluent speaker becomes a stammerer. He breaks the staff in twain, and he who was relying upon it is thrown down in utter helplessness.

#### **198. Nature—A Teacher.**

NATURE has an illustrative function; all its beauty, its splendour, its force, is to teach something beyond itself; there is a voice in the wind other than strikes the hearing of the body; beyond the common fragrance of the flowers there is an odour which reaches the soul; the glitter of starlight comes from a fire, veiled from all-eyes.



**199. God's Covenant Faithfulness.**

A COVENANT is but a form; a covenant is merely an arrangement, if it be not established upon moral conditions. There are circumstances in which God's faithfulness and God's unchangeableness are seen, not in fulfilling, but actually in the annulling, of covenants. God will never maintain the letter at the expense of the spirit.

**200. Heart *v.* Intellectual Training.**

No true manhood can be trained by a merely intellectual process. You cannot train men by the intellect alone; you must train them by the heart; and this shows the fundamental mistake which is being made by some modern teachers. You can never train a Church out of the head; you may have a Church so-called, and you may open halls and bring to them the most scientific men in Europe, and you may lecture on all scientific topics, yet you can never make a Church out of the head. You must take hold of manhood by the heart, if you would train it into strength and dignity and usefulness.

**201. The Realizing Power of Love.**

THAT prodigal child of yours is with you to-day. You cannot see him—you may not, perhaps, know his address—you may be unable to write to him, yet the lad is close to your heart. You see him when you retire to rest; you look at him in the morning as he is standing by your bedside; and he is with you all the day, notwithstanding his sin, and perhaps (so wonderful are the mysteries of the heart), the nearer because of his sin. There seems to go out after him a realizing love, deep and agonizing; and if he would but come back again, there would be more joy in your heart over that recovered one, than over all the family that never gave you a moment's pain.

**202. God made Ministers.**

WE speak of unlikely persons; but, after all, what do we know about unlikeliness in any of God's ministers? May the master not call what servants he pleases? Who are we that we should build our little gates, and double-lock them, and bolt them high and low, and watch them, and demand tickets of admission? Who are we that we should have weights and standards by which to test the Lord's sons? If it pleases the Lord to smite a kingdom by the hand of a child, who are we that we should demand a more proportionate instrument? If it pleases the Lord to direct the thoughts of a generation by means of an agency which we would condemn, who is right, the Infinite or the worm—the everlasting fire, or a flickering insect of the night?

**203. Christianity.**

SOMETIMES Christianity is represented as a kind of half Divine, half human thing, that comes in with a vast bundle of manuscripts for the purpose of collating this reading with that, and for the purpose of fighting a battle with grammars and lexicons, or for the purpose of getting up a great literary controversy. Now, I have no objection to sound criticism; in fact, the more we have of it the better. I do not say Christianity has no argument founded on the letter—nothing of the kind. Every manuscript that Christianity holds in her hand I would respect; I would encourage every man who goes in that direction to find defences of the faith and illustrations of the history of doctrine, but Christianity is something more—something diviner than that. Christianity comes into the world and says, "Is it lawful to kill men or to save them?" Christianity asks, "Shall men be lost or shall they be saved?" Christianity says, "I can debate with you under proper circumstances about all these literary and all these historical difficulties," but the grand questions, the all-absorbing and all-inclusive inquiry which Christianity has

to put to the world is this, "Will you be lost or will you be saved?"

#### 204. Sensitiveness of the Perceptive Power.

Two persons shall go into the same room; one of them shall be perfectly comfortable, and quiet, and easy, though in the room there are a hundred signs of disorder, not perhaps amounting to positive chaos, but strongly tending in that direction—there are persons who have no objection to chaos itself; but the other person instantly, on going into the room, without being inquisitive, without being prying, without trying to look, *must* see all the points of disorder; and there will come into the observer—in proportion as he is orderly—a sense of distress; there will be complaint; there will be uneasiness; there will be a feeling almost approaching resentment.

#### 205. Withered Hands.

*Withered hands come of withered hearts*: if there were no withered hearts there would be no withered hands—make the fountain clear, and the stream will be pure.

#### 206. Self-Trust.

HAVE you and I ever been kept from doing good to anybody, because we knew that a certain number of people would be opposed to us, and make censorious remarks upon us? Well, if we trust to ourselves, we ought to fall under human censure; but if we work with God, then, beyond all human censure, we hear the voice of Him that approves us, and whose approbation is strength.

#### 207. Unity in Dissent.

BECAUSE we dissent from one another, shall any man set himself up as infallible, as the judge of his brethren, condemning everybody that does not exactly come up to his standard? Shall we regard our dissenting from one another

as a licence for hard speaking, for uncharitable construction of one another's spirit and method? Certainly not. If we are *only* dissenters, then are we a miserable horde; if we live in dissent, and breathe in dissent, and move in dissent, and are never easy but when we are dissenting from somebody, and would dissent from ourselves if we were living in the world quite alone, then, I say, I have no sympathy with that kind of intellectual activity; it is a terrible, fearful activity from which I, for one, wish to be placed at a considerable distance. But all that is involved in intelligence of mind, in freeness of heart, in liberty of speech, I contend for, you contend for; and therefore the Episcopalian, the Independent, the Methodist, and the Presbyterian, can say to one another, using the words in their highest and not in their lowest acceptation, Are you Dissenters? So am I. There is even here a point of union which should be encouraged and strengthened, and as often as possible developed, so that society may feel it.

#### 208. My Father's Business.

THERE may be some who have no idea of what is meant by doing the business of their Father in heaven. They have always been working for themselves; they have never known the inspiration of love; they have never known the liberty of unselfishness; and it is impossible for them to pronounce any opinion upon those of us who have given ourselves to the service of our Father.

#### 209. Things as they are—Unseen.

COULD we but see things as they are, we should see the whole Church all over the world move in one grand procession towards the gate of the Upper City, a band of freemen, an army of conquerors, having banners dipped in light, and singing of the Cross that gives them the right of way to their Father's house. We cannot see things as they are. This is the day of cloud and gloom; the full brightness is not yet.

**210. Divine Impulse.**

IN the daily events of our life we mistake the Divine for the human. You may cross a street, and not know the reason why, and in that very crossing you may unconsciously be obeying a Divine suggestion. You may hold over the letter-box a letter, and suddenly you may say, "I'll not send it by this post," and your not sending it may occasion you a blessing that you never thought of. You cannot account for these things. You say, "I thought just at the last moment I would not do so;" but that is a fool's explanation of life. I rather believe that God's angels are just overhead, or just by our side, and that we do things by Divine impulse without always knowing what we are in reality doing. You say, "Yes, but don't let us be superstitious." I answer, I am more afraid of people losing veneration than I am afraid of their becoming superstitious; and it is a poor life that does not begin in veneration, and continue in worship to the end.

**211. Life Sorrow.**

INCREASE a man's life, and you increase his sorrow and distress; give him life more abundantly, and he will shed tears where other people would not understand his weeping. He will sigh and tremble where other persons cannot at all enter into the mystery of his life. What, then, if He who had all life, and who, when He gave life gave *Eternal*—what if He should have lived His three short dying years in a sigh, in a sorrow which at last broke His heart, and which to-day remains the mystery, yet the hope of the universe?

**212. Sudden Changes in Life.**

HERE is a man—called at least by courtesy a man—who is saying to himself—fit auditor, indeed—"This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and I will say

to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;' and just as he has concluded that monologue, a voice, terrible as the hand that Belshazzar saw, says to him from a hidden place, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee"—an unlikely time. Are we poor creatures not living for the time when we can build our barns greater, and say something comforting to our souls, and when we have laboured, and struggled, and toiled, and suffered, and just got what we wanted, God calls us fools, and sends us away? If we do not speak comfortably to our souls until we speak to them of barns being built greater, we shall suddenly come into the night of judgment and damnation. We call these breaks in our life *sudden*; but has it not been truly said that all things come suddenly to the blind? It is because we are blind that we feel sudden changes in life; if we knew the nearness and measured the wisdom of God, we should know that suddenness has no place in the all-embracing government of God.

### 213. Christian Unity.

How varied, how comprehensive, are the subjects on which we, as Christian thinkers and Christian servants, are agreed! When for an hour we can deliver ourselves from the pressure of our infirmities and characteristic littlenesses as finite creatures; when we can compare the deepest beliefs of our heart, and the highest experiences of our nature, how truly one we are after all, how diversified soever may be the badges and the labels by which we are distributed into various classifications.

### 214. The Hypocrite.

HERE is a man, who tells a friend of mine that he did not think I preached sound doctrine. I am only supposing the case. On a certain occasion that same man comes to me and says, "Sir, I cannot thank you enough for that discourse; it did me a world of good." Meanwhile the third

party has been to me and given me information of the adverse criticism. What is my duty? If I were a man in Christ I should say, "Thou hypocrite!" Yes, and the man would stagger and fall back. He would wonder what the matter was; he would think the foundations of the earth had begun to shake under his feet. I should put that man right, with his double face and his double tongue, if I could say to him, "Thou hypocrite! thou hast already pronounced adversely upon that discourse,—away!" Why, he would think, if he had the power of thought left, that a lightning-bolt had struck him, and it would be such a lesson to him as is rarely given in the schools of men. Were I so to say I should take the right course. Instead of that I begin to whine over him and to thank him, and to tell him how very encouraging his word is. Then I go home and say, "What a coward you are! You knew what the wretch had said behind your back: why did you not look straight at him and charge him with it?" That is the only way of clearing the air and putting things right.

### 215. The Way to Hell.

MAN *can* have his way. There is a point at which even God withdraws from the contest. "My spirit shall not always strive with men." If we be so minded—now let me publish this with a distinct, loud, clear voice that all souls may hear it and understand—we can force our way through all solemn warning, all pathetic entreaty, all earnest persuasiveness on the part of friend, wife, husband, teacher, preacher, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost! We can go to hell if we will! So don't be discouraged, you can get there! Don't be discouraged, there is nothing before you but love, grace, mercy, tenderness, God. That is all. There is a grim ghastly Cross,—hew it down! There is a way round it, a way through it, a way over it,—you can get there! Fool, coward! Not go to hell?

**216. Rest Needful.**

It will be confessed by all men, even by the veriest slaves to their ever-driving ambition, that physical rest is sometimes needed. The aching limb asks for it; the hand that is so weary that it cannot any longer hold pen, or tool, or weapon of war, says, in its trembling weakness, "Let me rest awhile;" and the fevered brain, over-driven, excited almost to madness, says, in its sleeplessness and throbbing and heat, "Let me rest awhile." Well, then, here is so much gained. We shall be able to make our way from this low point to a much higher phase of rest, and find our way upward, from the cry of the feeble and exhausted flesh, to the greater, more solemn, and urgent wants of our over-excited spiritual nature; we shall understand, in some degree, that our highest, divinest faculties must occasionally pause, rest, and recover themselves, if they would fully, with completeness and perfectness, discharge all the duties and obligations which Almighty God has imposed upon them. Rest is as necessary as labour. He is not a philosopher, but a madman, who lights the candle of his life at both ends.

**217. Man's Ideal of Greatness.**

HERE is a man who thinks it manly to blaspheme, swear, and use profane language upon every opportunity, and to ridicule religion and religious people. He knows that it is all wrong. He has revelations from the nasty little god that he worships that everybody in the world is all wrong but himself. And that man prospers! His fields are verdant in spring time, his crops are rich and golden in autumn. If you speak a word to him about religion he laughs at you, and intimates, in a not very roundabout manner, that you are a fool. And he owes all he has to a little invalid girl, who believes in God and prays to Him, and connects the house with Heaven! God blesses one man for the sake of another. The parent is honoured because of the Christianity of the child. The strong man has prospered in his way



because of the poor weak creature in his house who is mighty in soul towards God and truth. Yet these are the elements and the facts which are so often overlooked when men take stock and tell what they are worth.

#### **218. The Sabbath a Rest.**

REST is only rightly used when it is intended as a preparation for further service. Sunday is only truly queen of the week when it is used to acquire within its golden hours mastery over mammon and the world and daily care, and as a preparation to meet all those engagements, duties, and difficulties which shall press upon us on the coming morning.

#### **219. Sanctified Afflictions.**

IT is not until we are driven to our wit's end—till our staff has been broken—till our keenest-edged instrument has been turned back—till our vessels have been emptied, and all our resources have been consumed—that we begin to ask if there is a power higher than our own. You never would have been the man you are if your afflictions had not whipped you to Christ. You would have been self-confident, boastful, obtrusive, intolerant, impatient of weakness, if your heart had not been grieved, smitten, impoverished, and if in the depth of your humiliation you had not crawled—you never walked—if you had not crawled to Emmanuel, Son of God.

#### **220. True Eloquence is in the Hearer.**

AFTER all there is a good deal of truth in the statement that "eloquence is in the hearer." If I see a man looking at me with brightness in his eye and a smile upon his face, I can preach ever so much better. I preach to that man who is the electrical hearer. That is the man who touches me and draws out such virtue as I am able to communicate. It must be very hard work to preach to a brick wall. I don't know that it can be very tempting work to preach to empty pews. The youth with a bright face and keen eye

and eager look will help one. The old man with his silvered hairs, looking as if we were saying something that had blessed his life, will help one. And even your sorrow looking up with its chastened head in the house of God will draw upon one's heart strength and love and tenderness.

### 221. **Public Platforms.**

THERE are men who can speak to a thousand hearers, who are utterly weak and powerless when they come into the details of common life and have to teach a single child at home, and show the light of God upon the private paths of life. Others there may be who turn their public excitement into a temptation to go astray from plain, simple home duty. They have the ability; they are lacking in will. They can only show themselves upon public platforms, within great arenas of display; they are moved by public, rather than by intensely personal and moral considerations. Consequently, their own garden-wall is broken down, their own little flower-bed at home is all weed-grown, whilst they are busy with the great public fields and the great vineyards of the world. I would not speak harshly of such fathers: but if there be anything in these suggestions, and if any one should require a hint of the kind, tenderly, with self-restraint and brotherly forbearance, I would venture to say, Think of this; and, if you can improve, remember that now is the accepted time; you cannot too soon begin the work of family cultivation.

### 222. **"Drunk as a Beast."**

WE say, in our highly figurative words, if a man is intoxicated to a given point, that "he is as drunk as a beast." I should like to hear the beast's opinion about that. I never heard of a beast pawning anything that belonged to him that he might drink brandy and drink his powers away. No beast can be so bad as a bad man. There is no tiger in the forest that can be so savage as a pitiless mother. There is no wolf that ever came down upon a fold that can be so

terrible, awful in passion, in malignity, and in evil deed, as a man who has lost self-control and is carried away by his lawless passions.

### 223. Circumstances the Criterion of Opinion.

HERE are two men having a little talk about a district of country through which they have passed. One of the men's speech is this: "It is a poor, desolate, barren land; I never wish to go through that district of country again, it is so featureless, wanting undulation and variety, and that brokenness of line which delights an artistic eye, defective in colouring too,—it is altogether a poor wretched piece of country. I don't care ever to retrace my steps over it." The other man's speech is this: "I don't know a piece of lovelier country anywhere, the undulation is so easy, the lines are so beautifully broken up, there is such pleasing variety, you have all the features that can enter into a piece of beautiful landscape on a small scale,—not to be romantic, I don't know any lovelier part of English scenery." "Why!" you say, "the fact is that both these statements can't be true,—either the one man or the other is mistaken: they contradict each other flatly, and therefore both their statements can't be true." A third man puts this question, "When did you go through that district?" "Why, sir," the first man says, "I went through it in November, one of the foggiest, murkiest days that I ever found in the English climate." "When did you go through the district?" is the inquiry put to the second man; and he says, "I went through it about Midsummer, and a lovelier day I think never shone upon the island." Now we begin to see a little, at least, as to how the discrepancy came. A great deal depends upon atmosphere. The mountains are there in the night time, but you can't see them. The rich, verdant flowery meads are there at midnight, but you can't light up the landscape with your little candle. You must have the medium as well as the object. A great deal depends upon the clearness of the atmosphere as to whether we appreciate this object or that in natural scenery. So it

is with souls. A good many of us seem to have long winters, short days, poor artificial light, murky, gloomy, dispiriting weather, cruel fogs. Others of us have more sunshine, more summer weather in the soul. But what we want to understand is this:—That religion, right relations with God, a true standing before the Almighty, does not depend upon this feeling or upon that; it is not a question of climate, atmosphere, air, spirits: it is a question of fact. The question is not, How do you feel to-day? But, Where are you standing? are you on the rock? The rock won't change; the climate will. Be right in your foundation, and the season of rejoicing will come round again.

#### 224. *The two Bibles.*

No man can truly know human nature, who does not read *two* Bibles,—namely, the Bible of God as written in the Holy Scriptures, and the Bible of God as written in His own heart and conscience. Human nature was never so expounded as it is expounded in Holy Writ. No man ever comes to this book without feeling that his particular case—in all the minuteness of its detail, in all the subtlety of its mystery—has been dealt with by the holy writers. We praise other books because of the knowledge of human nature which they display, and we are right in making them one standard of our admiration and applause. We delight in a writer's power of analyzing human nature, human feeling, human conduct. We say, "He knows human nature thoroughly." Therefore such writers get hold of us and carry us away captive, and rightly so. If that be a true standard of judgment at all, I bind men who have not lost all candour and all simplicity to look at the Bible in the light of their own standard.

#### 225. *The Righteous are the Salt of the Earth.*

THE righteous are the salt of the earth. The true, loving and God-fearing are the light of the world. But for them

would God be patient with the world? What would it be, with His great power, to crush your little world, to pulverize and throw it away on the flying winds and forget it? It is Paul that saves the vessel on the stormy Adriatic. It is Joseph that blesses the house of Potiphar. It is the ten praying men that save the Sodoms of the earth from the lightning showers of judgment.

#### 226. Love.

THE world is made poor whenever it loses pathos. Whenever the emotional goes down, man goes down. Logic is but intermediate help; it is but a poor ladder compared to heart, love, pathos, sensibility. Love must endure as God endureth. This is it which binds Christ and Christians—*love*. Love is knowledge. Love hath the key of interpretation. Love can explain what learning can never fathom. Love knoweth the Lord afar off,—beyond the stormy deep, in the far-away desert, in the night-time dark and cold. Love can see the invisible, and touch the distant. Do we love Christ, or are we still in the beggarly region of mere controversy and cold intellectual inquiry? If we love Him we shall be with Him for ever.

#### 227. The Power of Religion.

RELIGION binds us to the infinite; it challenges our strongest powers; it lures even weakness itself towards might and courage; it speaks the word of hope and inspiration when we imagine that our whole task is exhausted.

#### 228. Everything in the Bible.

ONCE upon a time a grand old Methodist preacher, called John Nelson—a man whose life ought to be read often on Saturday night by preachers who have got their skeletons ready, in order that they might be fired to do their work—was obliged to become a soldier, and as he was arrayed, and was being mocked by many, a woman came to him and

said, "Nelson, where is now thy God? Thou didst say at Shent's door that thou hadst no more fear of all His promises failing than thou hadst of falling through the centre of the earth. Where is now thy God?" You know how mocking a bad woman can be, what sharpness there is in her voice. Nelson, in whom the word of God dwelt richly, said, "You will find the answer in the seventh chapter of Micah, the eighth and tenth verses." "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? Mine eyes shall behold her; now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets." Everything is in the Bible! There is an answer to everything in God's Book, only sometimes we do not know our lesson well enough to refer to the place. But these old Methodist preachers, who had nothing but the Bible, and perhaps a borrowed Concordance, were mighty in God's word, and oftentimes their sword, the sword of the Holy Ghost, cleft the opposition by which they were annoyed. I have some reason to believe that the answer given by John Nelson was literally fulfilled in the experience of the woman who taunted him.

### 229. The Sadness of Shallowness.

A SAD sight is a shallow young man—the dupe of a false gentility, or the slave of a fiery passion. He may *look* well, and yet be bad. He may advertise his tailor, yet disgrace his schoolmaster. Or, he may know much and yet *be* nothing. I have heard of a man who knew twenty-five languages, but never said anything worth hearing in any of them. It is one thing to talk about a ladder, and another to ascend it. It is one thing to know the road, and another to travel it. You may put books into you as men put hay into sacks; or you may vitalize them and reproduce them in blessed life.

**230. Love the Manifesting Power.**

EVERY great picture is saying to those who look upon it, If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him. It is not every man who can read a picture. To some men a picture is only so much canvas and so much paint, without life, without idea, without poetry; there the great work hangs, having no message to those who look upon it with unappreciative eyes. You have heard persons who knew nothing of works of art, who, in passing great pictures, have said, "That is not so bad," or, "What a glorious *frame* that is!" but into the soul of the painter they have not seen at all; they have not appreciated the expenditure of mind and soul which has been lavished on that costly work. On the other hand, there have been men who have stood before a great picture dumb with amazement, quivering with inexpressible delight, moved to the very depths of their being! The picture is the same, the light in which it is viewed by both parties is the same; yet to the one mind the picture is representing truths too deep for utterance, and to the other nothing but the coarsest exterior.

**231. The Inner Life Veiled.**

SOME men are unfortunately afflicted with coarse, harsh voices, which get for them a reputation for austerity, unkindliness, ungeniality. Other men are gifted with fairness and openness of countenance, gentleness and tunefulness of voice. When they curse and swear it seems as though they were half praying, or just about to enter into some religious exercise. When they speak, when they smile, they get a reputation for being very amiable men. They don't know what amiability is. They have no secret life. They weep for reputation; they make their tears an investment for a paltry renown. We don't want all our history to be known. We are content for men to read a little of what they see on the outside, and that they profoundly mistake oftentimes. But the secret history, the

inner room of life, what we are, and what we do when we are alone, no man can ever tell,—the dearest, truest, tenderest friend can never understand.

### 232. *Think!*

THE night does not close in suddenly. The common end is not with violence and terribleness. We go *gradually* down the steep, and as a general rule time is given for reflection. Your first gray hair says, *Think!* You have come to a turn in your life, *Think!* This gray hair is a notice to quit, *Think!* It is not a keen weapon which cruelly cuts us down, 'tis but a gray hair, and it says mournfully, *Think!* I hardly ever go out to walk in park or field but some one asks to be told the time of day. Little ones come smilingly to ask, and labourers call from their work. The gray hair tells us that the hours are getting on, and that presently the night cometh! Yes, presently! One gray hair seems soon to become two; the two four; the four a sprinkling; and the sprinkling a thick snow! I charge men with having had gradual and most gentle warnings from the hand of time! There was your first gray hair; there was your first day's sickness; there was your first consciousness that your power of endurance was failing! What, indeed, is all life, from the sunny laughter of childhood to the mellow solemnity of old age, but a succession of reminders that our days are few and our strength a bruised reed!

### 233. *Spiritual Battles.*

WE can get some notion of the results of a high spiritual battle by thinking of changes that take place in the lower circles of experience. We say of such and such a man, "He has not been the same person since he lost his son, or his fortune, or since he passed through a long and terrible affliction." His very visage may have been changed, his voice may have been softened, his way of looking at things and talking about things is quite new—much higher,



exceedingly refined ; and it is literally true that he is " not the same person ; " all the lines upon his face are deepened, his eye is brightened or dimmed, as the case may be ; and his talk about men is marked by a very gentle charity, or an elevated magnanimity. This was not his old method ; perhaps he was proud, perhaps covetous, perhaps censorious, but his dead self has been buried, and he walks among men in newness and bitterness of life. Are we not conscious of something of this in our own experience ? A great change has passed upon our spirit, our bearing, our language, so that persons who see us after long separation wonder at the change.

#### **234. The Bible Self-vindicating.**

THE Bible must be its own vindicator. . Not because our fathers believed in it ; not because it has a romantic history ; not because of priestly exhortation ; but because of its own proved power to enlighten the mind, to bless the heart, to elevate life, and destroy the power of death, must the Bible be held first in our love and highest in our veneration.

#### **235. Show your Tickets !**

Do we commence the journey immediately after we have taken our seats ? No. The same people who have addressed us up to this point seem never to have done with us ; not only with bell-ringing, and door-slamming, and strap-fastening, and wheel-banging and trying, but questions of a more personal nature. Hence the same men will call out to you after you have taken your seats, " Show your tickets ! " A most impertinent demand indeed, one would think. And yet after all there must be a good deal of ticket-showing in life, if things are to be upon an orderly basis, and we are to get on comfortably and straightforwardly in the world. Every man must have some kind of credential or other, to explain and justify the position he holds. Every man must sooner or later show his ticket. Suppose a man had shown a third-class ticket in a first-

class carriage, I apprehend the porter would not have said, "You've made a little mistake, but it's no matter." I rather think he would show him down the train somewhere. But if a first-class ticket were shown in a third-class compartment, probably the porter might not be so very rigorous in his morality. Still, justify your position: show your tickets; have some certificate, or proof, or warrant, or authority, for being where you are. It is needless to point out that I am not referring, in giving these directions, to mere pieces of paper, to parchment certificates, or to sealed tickets, but a man must have some mark for being where he is. Be he statesman, or philosopher, or banker, or tradesman, he must at one period of his life or other justify by a sufficient warrant the occupation of his position.

### 236. Censure not Self-vindication.

MAN is apt to think that he will be considered virtuous if he speak loudly against other people's vices. It is possible to have quite a genius in devising penalties, and yet for the heart to know nothing of true loyalty to virtue. Magistracy is one thing, righteousness is another. Law-making may be reduced to a science, but law-keeping comes out of the heart.

### 237. Friendless.

A POOR creature came to me the other day with a tale of bitterness. She had come to London to seek employment, but nothing came of all her labour. She seemed always to be too soon or too late; at all events, no door opened to admit her even to a chance of getting her daily bread. She said, "I have walked the streets for two nights, and where to go to I really don't know." There was no professional tone in her voice; she was not a trained beggar—she was an honest, but poor and suffering creature, who gave a straightforward and veritable account of herself, which I had every means of testing. Lonely—oh, so lonely—yet within sight of the healing pools! Most of us know what

this means, for some form or other of the unhappy experience has befallen us in the working out of our life. We sometimes make merry with recollections of this sort now that we are strong, yet the gash upon the young heart is not quite overgrown; we can still find it, and happy are we when our very failures have disclosed to us the purposes of love which God was working out.

### 238. "Immortal Youth."

It does not follow that physical decline necessitates spiritual decline. The Apostle teaches us the right doctrine when he says, "Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day." Though there is outward winter, there is summer in the soul. The snow is all over the stooping head, but the voice of the turtle is sounding in the glad and hopeful heart. Yet some men wither first in the soul! Outwardly, they flourish exceedingly: their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart can wish: but their souls have no thought, no hope, no heaven in foretaste. A gray head does not mean a withered heart. A man may be old in body, yet young in soul. True life is never old. No man's age is to be told by his mere birth-days; they tell the age of his flesh, but not of his spirit. The good, the pure, the wise, "flourish in immortal youth."

### 239. The Manifestations of Nature.

Two men shall walk along the same road; the one shall see nothing of beauty, and hear nothing of music; when he reaches his journey's end, he may, perhaps, have a dim impression that there was a hedge on one side of him, and that there was garden land on the other, he may not be prepared absolutely to deny that a bird or two might have been singing in the air as he came along, he may not be ready to take an oath that now and again he passed a wayside flower; but he knows nothing, he is not in the slightest degree enriched by reason of his walk through the enchanting scenery; to such an eye as his, Nature refuses to reveal

herself in any but her most outward forms, and even they are misunderstood by so blind a reader; the companion who walked with him has, on the contrary, enriched his mind with many a picture, he has heard voices which will linger in his ear for many a day, the wayside flower has spoken to him some tender message, and the whole scene has been to him as the distinct handwriting of the great Creator. How are we to account for the difference? The road was the same, the two men travelled the same path at the same moment, yet the one was poor at his journey's end, and the other was filled with a sweet delight: the explanation is easy; the one loved Nature, and therefore Nature manifested herself to his admiring eye; the other cared nothing for Nature, and Nature in return cared nothing for him.

#### 240. Love.

IN all our education and intercourse we find again and again that love sees farthest, hears quickest, feels deepest.

#### 241. Circulate the Bible.

IF the Bible is to be judged by its works there is, happily, an end of controversy. What is the best reply to attacks upon the Bible? *Circulation*. When men say the Bible is not inspired—circulate it: when they charge upon it inability to address the spirit of the times—circulate it: when they say it has outlived the circumstances which called for it—circulate it! Circulation is the best argument. Let the Bible speak for itself; there is no eloquence like its own; let it reveal itself in its own pure glory, not in the artificial flare of our commendation.

#### 242. Eternal Punishment.

NOR long ago a young man called upon me to ask me questions about theology and about preaching, and about pulpit styles and methods, and so forth; and I had a long and frank talk with him upon these questions. Not many hours after that a policeman called at my house, to ask me,

at that young man's request, to go down and see him in a police cell. I went early in the morning, and found the poor wretch there; he had been suddenly tempted—the devil had come down upon him like an unexpected storm. He got out—he went before the magistrates, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. "But three months—that will soon be over." The magistrate said, "Three months." Society says "For ever." Society never forgives. Society blots out of its theologic creed the doctrine of eternal punishments, and then turns round and inflicts the penalty upon its own offenders.

#### 243. Sincerity.

You speak of sincerity. I ask, *what* are you sincere in? Does anything turn upon the object of your sincerity? If you are sincerely giving to a customer over your counter what you believe to be the thing he has asked for, will you be fully justified in the day that you find you have poisoned the man? You *sincerely* believed that you were giving him precisely the very ingredient that he asked for, and that he had paid for, but you do not give him that ingredient, but something else, and ere the sun go down the man will be dead. What does sincerity go for there? If you indicate to a traveller, sincerely, to the best of your knowledge, the road along which he ought to go to reach a certain destination; if it be the wrong road, and if in some sudden darkness the man should fall over a precipice, will your sincerity obliterate everything like self-reproach? Were you *sure* it was the road? "No, but I was *sincere* in thinking it was." Did you explain to the man that you were speaking upon an assumption? "No, I thought there was no occasion to do so, I felt so sure." But you see that the mere element of sincerity goes a very short way in cases of that kind.

#### 244. Advanced Men.

THERE has been a sad upset amongst the fuchsias,—quite a rebellion in fact. As a general rule the fuchsia has *four*

petals, but in some cases it has been found that a *fifth* petal has been putting itself out. The four-petalled flowers complained bitterly of this as a violation of order and propriety. They disowned the eccentric fuchsias, and gathered themselves closer together for the defence of their traditions. I asked a philosopher to explain this to me, and his wise words I shall long remember: Four is, indeed, the regular number of petals, as is also the case with the woodruff and the evening primrose, but now and again a fifth petal discloses itself, not in ambition or foolish presumption, but in a beautiful effort *to reach the order of plants just above*,—the quinary order: the four-petalled flowers have spoken unjustly, because ignorantly, of their advanced brother; had they known more, they would have said less. I thanked the philosopher, and asked myself whether there are not some five-petalled *men* as well as five-petalled fuchsias?

#### 245. God in the Heart.

GOD need not be unto the human soul as a far-off and unapproachable King—He may be in the heart as a gracious Father. His presence need not be as a coldly glittering star away in the inaccessible heights, but as a summer filling the heart with fire, working in the life all the strange enchantments of intermingling colours, and covering the soul with abundant fruitfulness.

#### 246. What is your Profession?

A MAN says, "When that man who professed so much Christianity failed in business, I was on the point of giving up churches and chapels altogether." Doubtless that would be virtuous on his part. Oh! fool and slow of heart to believe the truth of God! When a man who is all skin and bone, who never felt volcanic fire in his heart,—never was led away by some dominating tyrannic passion,—hears of another kind of man straying from the right way, he instantly almost makes up his mind—what

he is pleased to call his mind—to leave the Church. Oh, fool and slow of heart! Didst thou profess the name of the servant or the name of the Master? Didst thou enter the Church because of the high and illustrious example of the members of the Christian community, or because convicted of sin thou didst crawl to the Cross and feel the healing effect of that falling blood? Where is reasoning—where is common-sense—when men say they have given up their Christian profession because some Christian professors are fickle, untrue, and inconsistent?

#### 247. Self-renunciation.

ONE of the first conditions required of us at the Cross is *self-renunciation*. If any man shall say, "I think I can defend my behaviour; I am sure I can excuse myself before Almighty God; I know that if opportunity be given to me I can put another face upon things in my life which are regarded as transgressions and shortcomings." Let a man talk in that tone and the Gospel has nothing to say to him; he has shut the door of his heart upon it. But let him, on the other hand, know that all power of self-redemption is gone out of him; let him know that he can do nothing towards his own recovery in the sight of God; let him be driven to this prayer—all prayers in one—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" and then Calvary is heaven, the Cross is the ladder the head of which rests against the sky!

#### 248. A Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, help Thy servants to do the work which will bear witness of Thee: help them to work while it is called day, so that at eventide they may have peaceful and grateful recollections. May we be jealous about our purity; may our life be a sacrifice; may our speech be a call to heaven. We mourn our inconstancy, our feebleness, our ignorance; but how great is Thy mercy—greater than the sea, greater than the firmament,—truly it is past finding

out! May our Christian name be a Christian reality, and our hope in Thee a light that shall make our whole life glorious! How rich in heavenly graces might our life have been, had we walked with God! We might have been princes in Thy house, whereas we are but as slaves, whose eyes are even towards the dust. Pardon us, blessed Father. Bind us to the Cross—give us hope in Thy dear Son. Amen.

#### 249. The Nature of Weakness.

ALL incompleteness is weakness, and weakness has but three courses before it—it succumbs to an ignominious fate; it takes advantage of compromise; or it defends itself by exaggeration.

#### 250. Limiting God.

STRANGE as it may appear, this is even so. Men are not always satisfied with the instruments and methods which God adopts. They limit the Holy One of Israel; they appoint the chariots in which He shall make the circuit of the universe; and if, rejecting these human vehicles, He shall walk upon the wings of the wind, and make the clouds the dust of His feet—if He pass by kings, and exalt mean men to His ministry, if he refuse the silver trumpet, and elect the ram's horn—there will be wonder and disappointment among those who are the victims of their own blind and boastful conceit.

#### 251. The White Ant—Hollowness.

You have heard of the white ant, that commits such terrible devastations in wooden buildings in some portions of the globe. That little insect, an inch long, will insert itself into the largest wooden structure that men can put up, and in course of time it will eat away the whole of it, leaving nothing but the thinnest outer shell; the building will look as if nothing had befallen it; the shape will be



unaltered; but put your finger upon it, or bring the slightest pressure to bear upon it, and you will find that it is no longer solid, but a hollow and useless outline. Is there not a more terrible power that enters into the inner nature of man, and utterly consumes all that is strong and noble and beautiful in his soul? Is it not possible for a man to have a fair exterior, and yet to have no mind, no sympathy, no tenderness? This is the dreadful ruin against which I seek to caution myself and others. So far as our outward circumstances are concerned, our fullest request may have been granted. We may have estates, titles, honours; men may wait for our word, and follow our guidance in all secular speculations and engagements; and yet it may be said of us, "In thy lifetime thou receivest thy good things"—so with the request, on the one hand answered to the utmost, we have on the other a soul that has been dwarfed almost up to the point of extinction.

#### 252. Views of Human Life—A Parable.

You know the joys of early morning in May—morning in the country which lies far away from the blight of city smoke; only in such country can Morning show herself as she really is; in other places she is veiled and disguised, as if the spirit of fear had laid hold upon her, or as if her delicacy shrunk from the tumult and noisomeness of city life. Not long ago I saw Morning in her fullest beauty; she smiled upon the hills, and shed her blessing on the valleys, like a priestess of the Most High God; orchards clothed with garments of many colours, fields rich with luxuriant pasture, gardens fragrant with many flowers, were all within sight; and as for the pure, healing, invigorating air, there was quite a busy population thronging its broad, free thoroughfares; birds were curving and darting in all directions, singing and chirping as they went their early errands; winged insects were intent on pursuits with which no stranger might intermeddle; from every tree there sounded a hymn not less touching because often abrupt and always incomplete; lambs were gambolling, and even soberer cattle

were not indisposed to return to the innocent follies of their youth. The whole scene had upon it the bloom of hope; the most decrepit life could hardly have resisted the spell of its renewing power; it was a morning that symbolized Resurrection and Immortality.

Standing on a hill-top a youth approached me, and soon showed that he was of a dreamy, contemplative, idealistic cast of mind; he had a world of fancies quite his own; he read messages on the green trees, and heard calls in the music of birds, which were concealed from duller men. From the excitement of his face I correctly inferred that his nerves often had the upper hand of him: he was all motion: there was life all over him so to speak, hence he was afflicted with a sensibility which occasioned him many a pain beyond the common lot of men. Notwithstanding this excitableness it is quite correct to describe his cast of mind as visionary; extremes met; he was as one who trembled in a dream. To him I ventured to put the inquiry—"What is life,—what does it seem like to you?" Instantly he answered, looking with most intelligent appreciation upon the enchanting vernal scene, "*This* is life, sir—this is life; brightness, beauty, music, promise—*this* is life!" For a moment I paused, as if unable to read his riddle, but in reality because I did not wish to trouble the happy dream of his young heart. He regarded my silence as a sign of inability to tell the meaning of his figure, and, to help me, he pointed to a spring in the hill-side: the water was pure, cool, clear as crystal, and as it sparkled it seemed to say to the sun, "You and I will make this day happy!" and then it streamed away over a stony road, to find the sea which lures all waters to itself. The youth looked upon the springing water as upon a friend, and heard in its minor music much of benediction; he dipped his hand into the pool, and threw the water from him, admiring the spangles which it made in the sun, and then he watched the descending streamlet; again he exclaimed, "Sir, *this* is life!" Like himself, I looked at the rill, and the joy which his contagious cheerfulness quickened in me

became a pain, for I saw on how rough a course the glittering and unsuspecting stream had entered. The riddle was unsolved. The stream was but a hint, not an interpretation. Nor could I blame my companion; for what did he know of life—was he not as one who has no yesterdays, and whose soul lives in the haze and mystery of the future? He bade me *listen to the silence*; he pointed out the birds, and called them by name; he diverted a thread of the stream towards a clump of half-opened primroses; and then we fell into silence again, and listened to the soothing hum of the morning. I took no note of the duration of our silence; but I remember with how startling an energy it was broken.

"Listen!" exclaimed the youth.

"What hear you?" he then inquired, in a subdued, but still earnest voice.

"A noise, as of distant trumpeting," said I, in a half-doubtful tone.

"And what does it mean?" said he, laying his hand gently upon mine; "what does it *mean*? Think of your own riddle, and there's the answer!"

"You puzzle me," said I; "what connection is there between my riddle and that sound? My riddle is, 'What is life?' and *that* is the sound of a musical instrument."

"Ha, ha!" said he, "the enigmatist requires an interpreter. Why, sir," he continued, "you must put one thing to another, and let your imagination give wings to your logic: that is the sound of a trumpet; it is a sound that means battle, and battle means victory; shut your eyes, and you will see all my meaning with the eyes of your mind—I see," he eagerly continued, "a hundred banners high in the sunshine, and on their silken surface there are letters of gold. I see thousands upon thousands of spears, bright as if they had been dipped in lightning; I hear men talking to one another of spoil, and victory, and honour;—Oh, sir, *that*—strength, joy, conquest—that is life!"

Still we did not understand one another fully; for the

youth and I seemed to be living in different worlds. Instead of finding in him the simplicity of young life, I found a manner of expression almost romantic; it would have been affectation, if it had been found alone; but as it was in perfect consistency with all the other features of his character, it was felt to be something deeper and better than a mere conceit. As we wandered slowly down the hill I was well aware of many an inquiring glance being directed to me by my companion. I thought, too, that perhaps my eccentric interlocutor was secretly rejoicing that he had kept the enigmatist at bay; but opportunity of testing the case was lost by the unexpected appearance of a maiden, who seemed to embody the very spirit of the lovely Morning. On her brow was the seal of wisdom, in her carriage there was the fearlessness of innocence, and about her altogether there was the all-revealing luminousness which moral reptiles dread and avoid. She hailed my companion with girlish frankness, and, with something like banter of tone, she addressed him.

"And how have things looked this morning?" said she; "come, brother, give me a straightforward answer, for once;" and then she looked at me, and her look was an explanation.

"We have been trying to answer a riddle," said I, "and if you will pardon me, I will venture to say that your brother's replies have been somewhat figurative."

She turned upon me an expression of countenance which plainly said, "I know it all;" and then added, interrogatively, "*a riddle?*"

"Yes," said I, "and, if you please, I will put it to yourself—What is life?" I cannot easily forget the penetration and brightness of her look, as she stood in reflective silence; she took but a moment to see through the mystery, and then she answered, "'What is life?' Why, it is A HOPE."

## II.

Summer noonday makes one glad of the shade of a great rock or a friendly tree. The sun is a fierce opponent when he strikes from his highest point; how gladly then do we hasten to the shadow, and let the burning conqueror have everything his own way! Within a most hospitable shadow I met a group of hard-working men taking their mid-day rest, and talking to one another about the unexpected turns and difficulties of life. They were men of mature years, just past their prime, yet strong in body and clear in mind. They did not talk about life in a bookish manner, nor did they talk about it off-handedly, but with mingled sobriety and humour, which made their homely talk quaintly pathetic.

"Five-and-twenty years ago," said one of them, "I never thought I should have been where I am now."

"Five-and-twenty years ago," said another, "I was as wild a youth as ever lived, going headlong to the gallows; and I should have gone too, but for something I cannot talk about."

"Five-and-twenty years!" said a third, musingly—"why I would not for the world go through the next five-and-twenty years as I have gone through the last."

"Very likely not," a serious man rejoined; "but life comes to us a day at a time; we never have to open two gates at once, and that's how we bear so much."

"Two gates at once!" the former speaker retorted, in a tone of surprise—"some of us seem to have to open forty gates at once, and we can find neither the handle nor the key."

"That's true," a new voice replied; "it seems to me there's nothing but gates to open, and the gates seem to have made up their minds not to be opened."

"It's a puzzle, isn't it?" another inquired, giving his head a general turn, so as to address the question to everybody in the group. "I call it a puzzle," he continued;

"what with trying to keep body and soul together, bringing up your children—God bless them!—giving them a bit of schooling, and going about from one place to another seeking work, it seems to me we are always beginning and never ending; we turn up just where we began."

This was unanimously declared to be a sensible opinion; so the speaker felt encouraged to proceed.

"Just like my little girl, bless her. She has given us more trouble and more joy than all the other children put together; for we never thought we could rear her. Why, bless you, for three weeks at a time I have never had my clothes off——"

"That's not the subject, friend," said the man who had confessed that he would have gone headlong to the gallows but for something he couldn't talk about; and there was nothing ungente in his tone, as he made this interruptive remark.

"Well, I was going to say," the speaker resumed, "that as she was knitting last night, and getting on capitally, down dropped the needle, and she had all her stitches to pick up again; that's just what we all do; we knit and knit, and just when we want to get on a trifle faster, out drops the needle, and we have a world of picking up to do."

"Don't think me hard, friend," the former speaker interposed, "for stopping you just now; for the fact is I cannot stand much about little children suffering; I know all about that; I have lost three little girls myself, so I can tell you there's a soft place in my heart;" and so saying, he turned away his head from the company.

I ventured to put in a word here.

"You seem," said I, "to take rather a gloomy view of life. Not long since I heard a young couple say that life is *a hope*, but you don't seem to think so."

An ironical but not disrespectful titter followed this remark.

"That's exactly what I used to think," said one of the men; "there was always something saying, 'Come on a few steps further,'—and the further you went the further it

went ; and so there was nothing but disappointment and vexation."

"It would be very different," another added, "if every man could live his own life, without having anything to do with anybody else's life ; but things get so mixed up together, till they're just like a thousand pieces of string that have got all twisted and knotted, and you can't make anything of them."

"Worse than that," a severe critic replied—"it seems to me there are too many of us for this little bit of a world ; so men are tumbling over one another, and it goes badly with the weak ones ; and then," he continued, without showing the point of connection, "when things seem to be over and done with, they come up again years and years after, and take hold of you like so many constables."

"That's a good 'un," said a rough-looking speaker, his eyes brightening as if he had suddenly met a friend ; "ha ! ha ! you've hit it there. I go to seek a job, and just as things are putting themselves together comfortably, and I see my way clear to a pound a week, a man comes up, and says he to me, 'You used to work for So-and-so ?' Says I, 'That's right ;' says he, 'That's fifteen years since ?' Says I, 'Right again ;' and something comes into my throat. Says he, 'Yes, I know, my man ; my uncle was foreman there, and he told my brother that you were turned off, but not for being a teetotaller ; is that right ?' So I begin to cough, and to talk rather queer, and I am told that there's no opening at present for a new hand."

"That's just how things come round and round," said one of the company ; "you think a thing is dead and buried, and so it is ; but there is sure to be a ghost, or somebody's uncle told his nephew, who mentioned it to his half-cousin, and so the thing dogs a fellow's footsteps right away to the miserable end."

"Isn't that exactly what I said," a former speaker insisted ; "things are all knotted together, and there's no getting them sorted ; you see, if every man could keep his

life quite alone, things would go a good deal straighter."

"But now," said I, "it is only fair to put the other side of the case: suppose our friend there, who was reminded of what he did fifteen years since, had at that time been a sober man—suppose he had pleased his employers, and made himself a good name—wouldn't he have found *that* a very good piece of string mixed up with the knot? You must not think that life is a one-sided affair."

"True," said one of the men; "fair's fair—if a man sows barley he cannot reap wheat, and if he makes a chimney-sweep of himself, he must not imagine that people are quite such great fools as to mistake him for a miller."

"Well," said I, "that's good common sense; now, if you will allow me, I will ask you a question: If you had to tell me in one word what life is, what word would you use? What is life?"

A man who had not spoken during the conversation, said, "I think that question has been pretty well answered by the talk we have just listened to, but if we have to put it into one word, I should say—life is a *maze*."

"So say we all," the men of middle age replied; "the answer is quite right—life is a *thicket*, A LABYRINTH, A MAZE."

### III.

Has not *Evening* charms of its own, as well as hopeful Morning and fiery Noonday? Does it not, in tender eloquence, speak of work finished and rest well earned? It comes upon the day like a benediction upon the prayer of labour, and is a hint of the Sabbath, as the Sabbath is a hint of heaven. It is the serene old age of the exhausted Day. It wears the sunset as a crown, and passes away to the great Shadow through the glimmering portals of the early stars. It is true that there is a touch of melancholy upon the tranquil countenance of evening, but its pensiveness is not sorrow. All endings have pathetic meanings: all victories have in them something of the sadness of



battle. Tell me of a more beautiful picture than that of an old man, white with the snow of score upon score of years, quiet with the holy peace of a good conscience, seated under the yellowing foliage of an aged tree, on an evening in advanced autumn? The picture is complete in pathetic consistency: descending life, retiring sun, decaying foliage, vanishing year—many evenings gathered into one! I remember such a scene; I remember, too, my brief interview with the venerable patriarch who was its central figure.

"I live in the past, sir, and not in the present," was his first sentence.

"Why not in the present?" I ventured to inquire.

"Ah, sir," said he, "the present is not to be compared with the past; life is hardly worth living now; things have changed, sir, and changed for the worse."

"Are you very old?" said I, in a respectful tone.

"So old, sir, as to be almost young again," he replied. "I shall soon have done with the journey now; I have passed the eighty-fifth milestone."

"And you don't care much for the things that are going on just now?"

"The fact is, sir," said he, looking steadily at me through his worn and feeble eyes—"the fact is, I *forget* them. Tell me of anything that happened in my life sixty—ay, and even seventy—years ago, and I shall remember everything about it; but do you know, sir, I cannot remember what happened yesterday."

"Now," said I, "there's one question I should like to ask you, if you will be good enough to allow me—How does life look now you see it from the far end?"

"Ah!" said he, "I can tell you how it looks to me. I often go back and see it all. I think of births, marriages, and deaths; I go over the histories of all the families I have known, and I say to myself—Where are the children and the children's children? I think of all the rich men that I have seen become poor, and of all the poor men that I have seen become rich; I walk over the churchyard and

read the lettering on the tombstones; I go from street to street in the town where I lived, and count how often the signs have changed names; I talk to young men about their grandfathers; and when I get a good long talk with anybody who is about my own age, why, sir, it seems as if my old heart was becoming young again"—the old man paused here, and a strange light gave new meaning to his face.

"And what does it all look like?" said I, holding him to the subject.

"Look like?" he repeated; "why, sir, it looks just like A DREAM."

So Morning, Mid-day, and Evening had each its own answer to the question, What is life? Youth said, It is a *hope*; Manhood said, It is a *maze*; Old Age said, It is a *dream*;—and in these answers I found nothing but sadness. The beginning was beautiful, the progress was exciting, but the end was full of pain: a hope that is lost in a tangled thicket, a thicket that leaves upon the mind nothing but the haze and mystery of a dream, such cannot be a true interpretation of the tormenting problem of life. I met an Interpreter who set these answers in a right order. "The answers," said he, "are correct; life is indeed a hope, a maze, a dream; but whoso believeth in me shall find that this order shall be reversed: youth shall be a dream; manhood shall be a strife; old age shall be a hope! When the traveller passes the last milestone, there shall arise upon the vision of his soul a light in which he shall not so much as see the momentary shadow which men call death."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not leave life a dream, it blesses it with a hope! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope," "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast:" "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed:" "now the God of hope fill you with all joy

and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." What is the effect of this hope on our life? Is it an occasion of indolence, of self-neglect, of presumption as to the future? The answer is clear and final—"Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as He is pure:" "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The splendour of our hope is to be the measure of our discipline!

### 253. True Kindness Unostentatious.

THERE is a way of doing a kindness which looks as if no kindness had been done, a gentle and delicate way which adds preciousness to the gift. I have known some men do a kindness as if they were receiving it rather than giving it, so that the poor were not made to feel their poverty. This was Jesus Christ's method, and it will be ours as we approach His likeness.

### 254. Ill-associated Partnerships.

THE principle of ill-associated partnerships works in two ways: the professing Christian finds it convenient to be able to remit all questionable work to the man who has made away with his conscience and honour, and the said man finds it very satisfactory to point to his professing partner as a proof and pledge that all is straightforward and upright. But is this as it ought to be? Do not let us slur over the question; let us face it steadily, honestly—with earnest intent to know the right and wrong of the case. You may say, that as partners you do not know each other except in a purely business light; you are strangers until you meet in business; you have no two pursuits in common; your tastes are marked by the strongest differences. Allow me to suggest that this explanation does not touch the point. A man cannot leave his *character* at home when he goes to business. The *character* is the man himself; he cannot leave *himself* behind.

**255. Redemption Older than Creation.**

ALL human penal law is *ex post facto*; it is made after the crime; it is something that comes up to meet a certain class of facts; or by so much as human law is apparently anticipative, it is founded upon inferences and probabilities which make it really retrospective. Crime came first, the statute book came next. On the other hand, God's treatment of sin was determined before the creation of man; for we read in the Holy Book of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. The idea of redemption was established before the infliction of mere punishment could by possibility be accomplished. The Cross is the first figure in the immeasurable past. Redemption lies at the very foundation of the Divine government. It is no afterthought; it is not the device of a magistracy organized to put down public crime; it is the expression of the infinite righteousness and the infinite love of God.

**256. Country Life Seductive.**

MEN do perfectly right in going to the country and enjoying all that fresh air and sunlight can do for them. After the exciting chase and toil of the day they require all the calmness which they can secure. But let me tell you that there are dangers connected with this kind of suburban life. It is not always a safe thing to train children in the higher planes of civilization without giving them to know that there are strata below them in which sin and poverty and misery are playing terrible parts. What if, in giving your children all the advantages of education and the enjoyments of country life, you should bring them into the City on the Lord's Day to enable them by teaching in the Sunday School, or by aiding other Christian agencies, to have an opportunity of expending their culture for the benefit of the unfavoured and the lost? I take it upon myself to say, that if you could spend any portion of your time in so doing, you would return to your country enjoyments with a keener relish, you would find in your fruits a sweetness,

and see in your flowers a flush of beauty, which otherwise could never be enjoyed.

**257. Helping Others.**

THE Christian method of service compels men to go out and seek opportunities of doing good; and to every man Jesus Christ says, "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren;" being healed thyself, help others to the place of recovery. It is an infallible sign that a man has not undergone Christian healing if he have no care about healing others.

**258. Love All-powerful.**

THE mother often knows more about the child than the father does. You may remember that in your childish days you were able to go to your mother with a very broken story, and she was patient and wise enough to put it together for you and make something of it; but you did not care to go to your father until you had a straightforward story to tell, and were prepared to stand a close cross-examination upon it. Perhaps some girl will mentally interrupt me here, and say that in her case it was precisely the contrary, for she could go to her father better than to her mother: I am glad to know it; such an instance does not at all destroy the validity of my position; it still remains true that where there is the most love there will be the highest power of interpretation, and that love will draw from its object most surely all that it requires.

**259. Think More—Sin Less.**

IF men would *think more* they would *sin less*. "Oh that men were wise, that they would consider!" If a man, before doing questionable actions, would carefully and thoughtfully sit down and examine his reasons for giving up his strength to certain policies, he would in many cases be enabled, on the ground of mere common, human, right reasoning, to avoid offences which stain and disgrace his daily life.

**260. What about the Heart?**

MAY I not impress upon the young who have yet to form their social relationships the necessity of their being at one with each other upon all vitally important questions, if they would really be, not outwardly, but inwardly, sincerely, enduringly happy. You are not to look at physical beauty, at social position, or at personal charms, strictly in themselves considered; all these have their place, and an important place it undoubtedly is; but under all these considerations there lies the great question, *What about the heart?* Believe me, if the heart is not right, if the supreme affection be not divine, the whole life will be one continuously downward course, ending in mortification, disgust, and ruin.

**261. Luck.**

LUCK! Some men have faith in their luck. They say, "Things will not turn out so badly after all. I have always been able to get upon the sunny side of the road, and something will occur to get me upon that side again. I have trusted the chapter of accidents. My chances have always turned out right, and they will turn out right again." There never was so mocking an idol as luck. Have you seen a great picture, which is on view this very day, of a scene in a gambling place, where everything seems to depend upon the shuffling of certain pieces of ivory or brass, on the doing of certain things in a skilful, quick way, when a wrong turn may mean utter waste of fortune and dis-possession of estate and inheritance? Have you seen what expression there is upon the countenances of the parties engaged,—what anxiety, what wonder, what hope, what pride, in some cases what shadowing despair, despair just begun, hope just going away? Yonder I can see a little fringe of light, and despair just coming on. It is the god luck that is tormenting his soul. But the young man who throws in a game of that kind and is lucky, will have another game to play. He has another competitor who will force

him, and say "Now you must have the dice out again." The name of that last competitor is Death, and he will play you. The young man says, "I don't want to play." Death grasps him by the throat, and says, "You *shall* play!" Now he gets hold of his dice-box, and Death always wins.

### 262. Keeping Diaries.

A BOY said some time since, as he was writing in a diary which the fancy of a moment had led him to buy, "Keeping a diary might change a man's life;" and when we asked him how it could do so, he replied, "Because at night, when he came to write in it, he would say to himself, What have I done to-day? And if he hadn't done anything, he might go out and do something." It was a child's notion, but there is a man's wisdom in it. We may not keep diaries, but a diary is kept for each of us, and day by day entry is made according to our industry or idleness.

### 263. Where are you for?

You have been in a railway station when trains have been preparing to go East, West, North, and South, and when suddenly and startlingly, in a clear and commanding tone, half a dozen men have shouted at once, "Where are you for?"—a very important question in a railway station, and everywhere else. Here are trains starting in all directions, and you are standing upon the platform, and it is demanded of you, "Where are you for?" Suppose a man should say in reply to that question, "I do not know where I am for," it would not require very long time to sit in inquest upon that case, and there would be perfect unanimity in the verdict that the man was a fool. It is amazing, however, how these verdicts and opinions upon people are turned back upon ourselves, oftentimes with tremendous accumulation of force and poignancy of application. There are men to-day in this great city, and in all cities, who, if you put the question to them, "Where

are you for ? ” will not be able to return a sensible reply to the inquiry. They may tell you the direction of their immediate errand, they may point out this street or that as their destination ; but looking at the question as involving the future, as touching upon affairs of destiny, they absolutely know nothing. They are groping round an endless lane ; they hope to arrive somewhere, and they have a dull impression that probably it will be somewhere that may after all be for the best. But is this a right way of going on in life ? Ought not a man to have something definite before his own mind ?

#### **264. Dignified Distress.**

As a general rule the complaining man is not the most deserving man, nor is destitution always to be measured by outward signs of distress ; there are some who cover their sorrow with laughter, and talk so hopefully that they are never suspected of want.

#### **265. A Good Man's Opinion Invaluable.**

No man is at liberty to despise the opinion of good men. That opinion should be prized on every ground, but specially as a stimulant to a still higher life. The good man's word of encouragement helps us many a time to recover heart when going up the hills of hard duty, and is often to us as a word immediately from God.

#### **266. Conception of God.**

**WHAT** is your conception of God ? What is He to you ? Is He a mere power, or is He the fountain of grace ? Is He a respecter of persons, or does His heart go out after all mankind in unutterable desires of love ? Is He a dread Presence from whom you turn your eyes in fear, or is He the light which makes your hearts morning though your vision cannot suffer the blaze of His glory ? Does He abide in the inaccessible depth of eternity, enclosed by doors which never open, and guarded by watchers who



never sleep, or is He close at hand, nearer than the light, moving every pulse of your life, and counting every hair of your head?

### 267. *Revenge.*

REVENGE is sweet! I am afraid that some of us like just a little revenge; not that we would ourselves personally and directly inflict it, but if our enemies could, somehow or another, be tripped up, and tumble half way at least into a pit, we should not feel that compunction and sorrow and distress of soul which, sentimentally, appears to be so very fine and beautiful. Nothing but God the Holy Ghost can train a man to this greatness of answering the memory of injury with tears, and accepting processes in which men only appear to have a part, as if God, after all, had been over-ruling and directing the whole scheme.

### 268. *The Old Man's Talk.*

ALL old men like to talk about themselves. They are their own library. Their recollections, like the sea-shells, have in them the boom of the ocean, and in that boom they hear messages from the venerable past. Let the old man talk. His tones fascinate himself, at least, and he has a right to the harmless entrancement. Peter says, "I will not be negligent," "I will stir you up," "I will endeavour." His eye brightens, and in his voice there is a quiver of emotion; he sees the heavenly port; he feels that he is breaking up fellowship with this tabernacle; he descries the glory-crowned Beulah; he hears the play of the wave as it breaks on the sinless shore; and then speaks with rapture of an "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

### 269. *Life in Heaven an Endless Variety.*

Is God all-wise? Then we have a guarantee of endless variety in our future studies and services. God is ever extending our knowledge of His works, in reward of the

endeavours we are making to acquaint ourselves with the wonders by which we are enclosed. We have found nothing of mere repetition in His plans. Each star has its own glory, each flower has a bloom and a figure peculiarly its own; the very stones are known by a distinctive impress. We have eternity before us—in itself a terrible consideration, only tolerable when thought of in connection with God's infinite wisdom: men grow weary when doomed to continuous pursuit of one object; monotony depresses and enfeebles the mind; to think, therefore, of having to live eternally is in itself a punishment, apart from the fact that no hour of the endless duration shall be unblest by the hallowed excitement occasioned by increasing intelligence and deepening love. God will ever have something new to communicate to the mind of His servants: secret after secret will be given up to their possession; realm after realm will be thrown open to their investigation; and when unnumbered ages have expired, the infinite riches of Divine wisdom will be undiminished.

#### 270. The Merchant and the Man.

OF course it will be said that business is business, and religion is religion, that there is a distinction between the merchant and the man. Very well. Let us, merely for the sake of getting on, admit that, there remains this question: when the merchant is damned for his wicked deeds, where will the *man* go? I am not aware that a man can serve the devil with one hand and God with the other. Where is the evidence that a man may have two characters, as he may have two coats?

#### 271. The Nearness of God.

GOD says to us, when we stand at the foot of great hills and mountains, "I will beat them into dust, I will scatter the dust to the winds; there shall be a level path for your feet, if you will but put your trust in me." I hold this to be a sublime offer. No man who has heard it ought to feel

himself at liberty to act as if God had not made a proposition to him. And such propositions ought to endear God to our hearts. Here He is beside us, before us, round about us, to help, to lead, to bless us in every way: not a figure in the distant clouds, not an occasional appearance under circumstances that dazzle and confound us, but always at our right hand, always within reach of our prayer, always putting out His hand when we come to dangerous places.

### 272. Critical Trials the Test of Manhood.

SOME time ago I heard a party of friends singing the same piece of music. For a while their voices blended very sweetly, and I, not being able to offer a scientific criticism upon the performance, thought that they were all about equal. But presently they came to a passage of very high notes, very lofty music; and in that moment they all ceased but *one*, and that one voice went aloft—alone, and thrilled me by the perfectness of its ease! If they had stopped before that, I should have said, “I give you common applause; one is as good as another, and I thank you all.” But there was a time of trial, and in that time of trial the masterly voice rose where other voices could not follow it. It is so in the greater concerns and trials of life. For days together we seem to be tolerably equal, but there come special hours, critical trials, and in those moments—which are condensed lifetimes—we show the stuff we are made of and the capacity we represent. It is *then* that the religious man—if deeply and truly intelligent and earnest—shows himself a man.

### 273. Sincerity should be fixed to the Cross.

MERELY to say “I am sincere,” is to say nothing. We must inquire, what is the object upon which your sincerity fixes itself? what is the degree of its intelligence, and what is the degree of its conscience? When any man has returned clear earnest answers to these inquiries, my belief

is, that he will find himself short of something, and that that something which is absent will be found to be the truth as it is in Jesus,—the Cross, the one Cross, out of which every other cross that is true and useful must be made!

**274. The Fallacy of Earthly Honour.**

BUT few men in any country touch the highest point of fame; thousands upon thousands in all generations come to honour and influence, yet in a few months after their death their names cease to have any interest but for the smallest circles. This reflection ought not to discourage virtue. Peace of heart is better than mere renown. To be known in heaven is the best fame. To have a place in the love of God is to enjoy the true exaltation.

**275. The Personal Claims of God.**

GOD's claim upon the individual life is always asserted. God detaches men from early associations, from objects of special care and love, and makes them strangers in the earth. The family idea is sacred, but the Divine will is, so to speak, more sacred still; when the God of the families of the earth calls men from their kindred and their father's house, all tributary laws must be swallowed up by the great stream of the Divine Fatherhood. These calls, so shattering in their social effect, and so painful in their bearing upon the individual heart, are necessary to shake men out of the secondary positions into which they would settle themselves.

**276. The Christian's Influence.**

THE Christian ought to clear a space for himself wherever he goes. Little children, humble hearts, mourning souls, reverent, noble, heavenly-minded persons ought to come round him and say, "Welcome in God's name. Don't leave us: abide with us a long while;" but knaves and cowards and hypocrites, people who are rolling iniquity

under their tongue as a sweet morsel—masked people—ought to feel terribly uncomfortable when a Christian man comes among them. They ought to know him from afar. There should be surrounding him a kind of atmosphere in which men that are evil cannot breathe and live—the knave should shrink away from his sight, the coward should bide himself in the lowest and vilest dust, and the man who was contemplating some keen, clever stroke, in which there should be dishonour and injustice, should feel himself paralyzed, disabled, half-damned, in the presence of a man whose soul is a-fire with Divine truth.

### 277. True Greatness must Appear.

SOMETIMES a man cannot be read by his own age. The prophet lives in the future. He cannot be comprehended by the soothsayers, the magicians, and the monthly prognosticators. Some will say that he is Elias, and others one of the old prophets. All kinds of speculation will be suggested. As in an oil painting, those who come too near will see nothing but thick flakes of paint. But his day will surely come. The darkness may be long in comprehending the light; but the light will certainly prevail. The wise word may be long in winning a fit audience, but its hope is in its ages. The profound book may remain sealed, but some of the kindred of the Lion of the tribe of Judah will arise and open the volume, and interpret it to a wondering and admiring world. Persevere. Quit you like men. Say again and again, with a hero's hope, "I will endeavour," and, verily, you shall take your sacred place among

"The dead but sceptred monarchs who still rule  
Our spirits from their urns."

### 278. Christianity does not Equalize.

CHRISTIANITY does not equalize the character of all men, any more than the sun equalizes the value of all trees. There are Christians who are barely saved from being devils, and if they are this *with* Christianity, what would they be *without* it?

**279. Be your own Pioneer.**

*SHOW the practical strength of faith.* Don't pick your trembling steps across the stones pioneers have laid for you; be your own pioneers, make your own ways, and show the originality and high daring of profound trust in God. I dare say you may be afraid of rashness—you are partly right, yet it is possible you may hardly know what rashness is. It is certain that the world is deeply indebted to its rash men, its first travellers, its leading spirits.

**280. Profession no Criterion.**

WE are not to judge a man by the loudness of his profession. We are not to condemn a man because his profession is feeble. The one determining question is not, "Have you a label outside?" but, "Have you the grace of God in your heart?" The question is not, What is your profession when written out under so many leading divisions, and indicated by so many minute points? But, What is the life of your soul? what is the being of your heart? what is it that in your heart of hearts you love most? and what is it for which you would die, if need were?

**281. The Two Ways of Reading.**

THERE are two ways of reading. There is a way of reading the letter which never gets at the meaning of the spirit. There is a way of reading which merely looks at the letter for a partial purpose, or that a prejudice may be sustained or defended. And there is a way of reading which means, —I want to know the truth; I want to see really how this case stands; I am determined to see it. He who reads so will find no end to his lesson, for truth expands and brightens as we study her revelations and her purposes. He who comes merely to the letter, will get but a superficial answer in all probability.

**282. Prosperity.**

MEN of business! ye whose barns are full, whose rivers overflow, on whose estates the sun has written "PROSPERITY," and into whose garners autumn has forced the richest of her golden sheaves, hear me! Know ye that these things are all gifts of God, and that He who gave them can also withdraw them? "I will destroy and devour at once—I will dry up all their herbs." He has right of way through our fields and orchards; our vineyards and oliveyards are His, and He can blow upon them until they wither, and cause their blossom to go up like the dust. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree, yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Not a fibre of his root could be discovered! Not so much as a withered leaf drifted into a ditch could be traced! All gone—the great branches gone—the bark gone—the trunk gone—the root gone—and the very name had perished from the recollection of men! It is poor prosperity that is not held by God's favour.

**283. Thoughts and Thinkers.**

EVERY true thought is a globe of light, which shall never cease to shine in the world's brightening firmament. Passing all computation is the reward of the great thinker or the illustrious servant. His compensation is an ever-recurring circle; literally, it never ceases; the cup of water always comes back changed into wine. God has never done putting crowns upon the head of the faithful.

**284. Natural Nobleness to be Esteemed.**

NATURAL nobleness ought never to be underrated. Why begrudge to the heathen a nobleness which was as surely of God as our own Christian excellence? There are men to-day who make no profession of Christian faith, whose honour, straightforwardness, and generosity would put to

shame many who claim a good standing in the Church. I make this statement without reservation; yet it must be explained that it is not through Christianity, but for the *want of it*, that professors are humbled before men of the world; and it must be added, that men of natural elevation of temper and sentiment would attain a still intenser lustre by the possession of that life in Jesus Christ without which all other life is either artificial or incomplete.

### 285. Educate the Spiritual Faculties.

WITH the naked eye in relation to scientific inquiry, I can tell one plant from another, I can tell one star from another, it may be; I can distinctively say, "That is the sun and yonder is the moon." But do I rest there? What would be thought of a man who said, "I can see enough for my guidance; don't trouble me with your scientific glasses, or mathematical instruments, and your optical assistance. Away with them! Do you mean to tell me I am a blind man?" The man who talked so would be instantly condemned as a fool; people would laugh at him, and say he didn't know what he was talking about. Yet is it not perfectly true that he can tell one grass from another, one insect from another, one star from another, up to a certain point? But the wise man, the true student, says, "I dare not trust my judgments to the vision of the naked eye. You must give me a microscope through which to look at this leaf and this insect; you must give me a telescope with which to search the heights of the heavens." What if in higher things we act precisely on your own principle? We can see great differences, we can say decisively that one thing is right and another thing is wrong; but we want the naked judgment—if I may be allowed the expression—the naked conscience to have the assistance of such mediums and such instruments as God has specially provided for the education of our spiritual faculties.

### 286. The Great Man the Forgiving Man.

THE great man is always the first to make propositions of conciliation. The great and noble nature is always the first



to say, "Come, let us see how this thing, after all, can be made up." It is, generally speaking, the man who has injured us that holds his spite so long; the man who has done us wrong, that seeks to do us still further injury in order, in some way, to justify himself to himself as also to society. But the man who is offended, justly offended, is the first to say, "I bear no malice, I seek for no ordinary or paltry retribution, I shall find no satisfaction in seeing you humbled and disgraced. Come now, let us discuss the matter in all its bearings, set it in its various lights, and see what it really means; and if it be possible to restore harmony, let harmony be restored."

**287. Steady Growth produces Greatness.**

WHEN brethren were all pressing Him with petulant importunity to take a bolder position in society, He made this quiet but most blanching reply, "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready." The fungus grows and perishes within the compass of a few hours; but the oak is the growth of centuries. The great truth set forth in Christ's reply seems to be, that in proportion to the width, and volume, and weight of character, and in proportion to the duration and splendour of destiny, is the time required for a man's full unfoldment and consolidation. The *rocket* splutters out all its empty secrets at once; the *stars* have not told all their story yet. We must not measure all men by the same rule. One man comes to his full estate in a single day, as it were; another must do cures to-day and to-morrow, and not until the third day is he perfected.

**288. Goodness true Greatness.**

THERE will always be central figures in society, men of commanding life, around whom other persons settle into secondary positions. We cannot all be Abrams; we cannot all have distinct names in the future. Yet, though we cannot have the greatness, we may have the goodness of Abram.

**289. Posthumous Life.**

THE fact that life is the cause of influence, that life is attended with results that are imperishable, greatly enhances the dignity and responsibility of living. "No man liveth unto himself." A man's audience may be small to-day, but if he has a *living* word to utter, his congregation will increase with the ages. Is MILTON dead? Is BUNYAN clean gone for ever? Is PASCAL's memory like a vanished star? Milton never sang to so large an assembly as he sings to to-day. Bunyan is, so to speak, more alive to-day than when he dreamed the world's happiest dream; he had life *then*, but he has "life more abundantly now."

**290. Our Life known to God.**

Is God all-wise? Then our individual life is all understood by Him. That life is but dimly known to ourselves. We catch glimpses of it here and there, but its scope and meaning are still unrevealed to us. We are often in shadow. There are scattered rays of light, but no steady shining of the sun which protects us from the mystery of much darkness. It is enough that God knows our life, and that His wisdom is pledged as our defence. To-morrow is coming upon us, and we know not with what messages and revelations, with that joys and troubles; but God is coming with it, and in His path is the brightness of all-sufficient wisdom. We are quickened by the very mysteries of our life: view them atheistically, and they become terrors and distresses before which the most daring courage quails; but regard them as under the control of beneficent power, and an eye of glory opens in the very centre of the gloom.

**291. Life and Influence.**

SUBLIME life and sublime influence are cause and effect. If we are careful about the life, the influence need not excite our anxiety. It is ours to plant, and ours to water; and the increase in this, as in everything else, is with God.

**292. Dwell Deep.**

*"Dwell deep:"* have great principles at the very base of your character; have root in yourselves; see that you are not mere waifs and strays, the sport of every wind, but that you have laid hold of the very substance of life so firmly that not even storms may be able to shatter or destroy your being. Depth of life is not mystery of life; it is not unreasoning hope; it is intelligence, it is faith, it is reality. In all great buildings there is a good deal of unseen work. No matter how glittering the pinnacle, if the foundation be insecure, its glittering eminence is only so much danger. Reputation is the outward man, character is deep as the very life. What if our reputation be as the perishing scent of a frail flower, instead of the strength of a tree, whose roots have laid hold of the very fatness of the earth, and laced themselves upon the immoveable rock?

**293. Self-condemnation.**

You cannot beat a man with rods, and cause him to suffer to the utmost extremity of his capability; you cannot whip a man with cords till you have whipped him enough: every man must whip himself. The Spirit of God must be so revealed in a man that he will see himself as he really is, and pronounce his own sentence upon himself, so that he shall turn himself away from heaven, and from life, and from God, and from saints, and say, "Yes, it is right; I ought not to be there. If there is a devil in the universe, he only can be my fit companion."

**294. Lovers of Vice.**

To love vice is to be a learned scholar in the school of the infernal spirit; is to be really clever at wickedness, to be refined in iniquity, to be a genius in abomination. Some men are so little learned in the arts of the Devil as to expose themselves to the interference of the policeman

and the magistrate ; they are such clumsy servants of their bad master as actually to be imprisoned, and to be otherwise punished by the laws of their country ; others, again, are such adepts in the art of doing that which is forbidden, that they can manage to build up a reputation for respectability while they are actually engaged in practices which cannot bear the light of day,—so silent are they, so skilful, so deeply do they love the Devil, that they receive from him the most secret manifestations, whilst they can look abroad upon the world with a face which simulates the appearance of innocence.

**295. The Necessity of Permanence.**

No man is at liberty to stray away at the bidding of his fancy, upsetting the order of civilization and inflicting discomfort upon all who are connected with him merely to gratify a whimsical curiosity. Society is founded upon order. Permanence is a condition of healthy growth.

**296. The Hired Ministry.**

You listen to a minister suspiciously because he is paid for preaching. Very good. I only insist upon your being consistent throughout, then what will happen? When you are drowning, you will ask the lifeboat men whether they are paid for their services, and on being told that they live by their occupation you will nobly perish in the deep. When your house is in flames, you will demand, notwithstanding the stifling smoke and cracking timbers, whether the fire-escape men are paid for their work, and on learning that they have a pound a week you will embrace the flames with a martyr's rapture. Of course you will do so. But let me tell you that men who try to save life never *can* be paid! A man may pay for his coat, but he can never pay for the services which, by the blessing of God, redeem and sanctify His nature.

**297. God is Merciful.**

I HAVE heard, in the course of my ministry, again and again, people say, that God will be merciful ; at the very

last He will say, "Ah well, you have lived a bad life, I know, but I forgive you—you may go into heaven." There is nothing so false in reasoning, so absurd in logic, so corrupt in morals, as vapid sentimental talk of that kind! What then does God propose to do? He proposes this: "Do you feel the sinfulness of sin?" Yes. "Do you renounce all hope of saving yourself?" Yes. "Do you know what sin is *as* sin? Not merely as a social offence, not merely as a national or social crime, but sin as *sin*; and do you hate it as such?" I do. Then God says to you, Take all the grace you need; the Cross is the answer to the pain of your conviction, and the atonement made by My Son is the way, and the only way, and the infinitely sufficient way, to pardon, to purity, and to peace!

298. **Zaccheus.**

"And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

OBSERVE the development which is traced in this verse. Jesus Christ *looked, saw, and said*. It is possible to look without seeing; many men can look upon the throngs of the world without emotion; human history has to them no deep significance; in their eyes men are but customers, clients, patrons; the idea of immortality never mingles with their coarse thinking. On the other hand, it is possible both to look and to *see*; to the highest type of mind, the sight of a crowd brings sadness of heart; every man is seen to be a mystery—to be the bearer of untold sorrow—to be the distracted subject of many ambitions—to be weak through sin, and to be bearing the black seal of death; to such types of mind life becomes one long sigh, by reason of the wickedness which enfeebles and dehumanizes the race. It is possible, however, both to look and to see, yet not to *say*. There is a want of moral courage, even where there is a deep appreciation of the necessities of the case. Many men will tell you, that when they have been brought into

contact with men of extreme depravity, they have just been on the point of preaching the Gospel, yet they have forborne to speak the Word of life. When Christians *look*, and *SEE*, and *SAY*, there will go forth into the world such an evangelizing commission as never yet sought the recovery of men.

### 299. The Battle of Life is Spiritual.

GIVE me to feel that the strongest will win ; that he who has most arm will have most wealth and most enjoyment generally in life ; give me to feel that the weakest must go to the wall, however good he be, and I cease to be a man, I lose many of the qualities which redeem men from the utmost vulgarity and bestiality ! But tell me that the highest strength is spiritual, that the noblest power is the power of ideas, the power of love ; give me to feel that God is watching the battle, and that eventually he will make right victorious, and instantly I start my life from new centres, I am controlled by new and higher considerations.

### 300. Religious Creed gives Security.

YOU believe in God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Now, *what is the value of that faith to you ?* In other words, what does your religious creed, upon that subject, do for you ? I answer : *It gives me REST.* I feel that things are not left to haphazard. I see God on the wings of the wind, in the light of the morning, in the beauty of the seasons. I know that because His hand is uppermost, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not fail.

### 301. Judge not by fair Exteriors.

SAMUEL was expressly warned not to look upon the countenance or stature of Eliab, the towering and most king-like son of Jesse. May there, then, be a discrepancy between the countenance and the heart ? May a man's face be beautiful and his soul be deformed ? If so, this should make us cautious in our judgments, and should give

a new tone to our criticisms. Is there aught more revolting than the discovery, that under a most beautiful exterior there may be a false or a cruel heart? Were life what it ought to be, the outward and the inward would harmonize; a smile on the face would mean a smile on the heart; yea would mean yea and nay nay; and everywhere there would be perfect and incorruptible sincerity.

### 302. To be laughed at by God.

THE kings of the earth—those decorated playthings, when not true men and kings in heart as well as in hand—the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying—this is their bond—“Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” That is one side of the picture. What is the answer? He that *sitteth* in the heavens *sitteth* without agitation, discomposure, or momentary apprehension. He that *sitteth* in the heavens shall laugh—*what* laugh? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together; they get up their little plot, and they are going now to bring things their own way, and the great, quiet Sovereign of all shall—*what*?—shake Himself, call His thunder, take down His spear? No!—shall *laugh*! *Laugh*—and no man survives the laughter of God’s derision! A terrible thing it is to be laughed at by God! Strike us, reason us down, send angels to bind us, and in these humiliations we shall find some little tribute to our greatness; but, O God! do not *laugh* at us. When God sets the universe laughing at a man, where can the man find rest? There is a poor outlook for those who are going to fight God!

### 303. The Drama of Life.

WE are all mixed up in novel-making and play-acting. Some men write novels; but all men make them. Life is a romance. There is a drama going on in every kitchen and every parlour, in palaces and hovels, in kingdoms and

villages, and in every heart, from the child with her doll to the king with his crown. Every architect is a dramatist, so is every organizer, so is a statesman, so is a clergyman.

### 304. The Difficulty of Forgiveness.

It is impossible for the Almighty Himself to forgive men unless men come to him with contrition, with repentance towards himself, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Believe me, there is no action so difficult as the action of forgiveness. There is no action so complicated as the action of pardon. It seems a very simple thing to say, "I forgive you; say no more about it; there is an end of the whole affair: away you go." He who could speak so, is immoral. He who could talk so, is not to be trusted. If a man could treat the moral relationships of life so, it would but prove that his conscience had been drugged, that his judgment had been hoodwinked, and that there was nothing morally permanent in the quality of his soul but its corruptness.

### 305. Our Death ends not our Influence.

*Our personal absence does not terminate our influence upon earth.* We are setting in motion a train of influences that shall outrun the wheels of the world, and be but commencing when those wheels take fire and cease their revolutions for ever. Tremendous is the responsibility of those who have to operate upon unformed and unsettled mind. The writing which you parents write can never be obliterated. Even circumstances to which you attach little or no importance haunt the memory. The frown, the smile, the gentle word, the harsh rebuff, are not to be forgotten! A terrible thing it is to live! Sirs, *dying* is nothing! *Beasts* die. *Living* is everything! On every side the invisible is pressing upon us. The lifting of a hand sends a shudder to the stars! The falling of a tear is heard in the depths of the Infinite! We little know how sensitive is the universe. Wherever I put the tip of my finger I touch the hem of the King's garment. The stones need but a word



from heaven to cause them to stand up as children of Abraham. What, then, shall be said of the *moral* universe? Experiences, ideas, emotions run on from age to age, and thus *to-day* bears the uncounted riches of all expired time. To live once is to live for ever. The feeblest pulse in the obscurest circle flutters and thrills on in its influences when faded worlds expire, and shattered empires go down in death.

### 306. Bible Truths v. Atheistical Lies.

THE Bible says to me, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." And the tempter says, "Shut up the Bible and be your own shepherd." "But I am bruised, and wounded, and heart dead." He mocks with such advice. The Bible says, "Ho, every man that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come!" The tempter says, "You have no thirst that you cannot slake in the muddy pools that lie at your feet." The Bible says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in the time of trouble." The tempter says, "When you are in trouble dry your own tears, and get out of your own difficulties, and snap your fingers in the face of the universe." The Bible says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The tempter says, "Lie down on the thorns; pillow your head on the stones; rest in the wilderness; take a moment's sleep in the desert." The Bible says, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The tempter says, "You have never sinned; what forgiveness do you want? go and wash your hands in the river and you will be clean." Jesus in the Holy Book says, "In my Father's house are many mansions." The tempter says, "Your mansion is the dark cold grave; get into it and rot away!"

### 307. Gray Hairs.

IT was a very funny thing in the family when your little girl who was playing joyfully with you exclaimed, "Why,

father, what do you think I see?" "Well, what do you see, my dear?" "Wait a moment,—now don't stir, and I sha'n't hurt you,"—twitch! "there it is,—a gray hair! Never! Yes, it is though. Ma, is it not? Johnny, look here, and tell us the colour of this hair!" It is held up to the light, then laid upon a black sleeve, then there is no doubt at all about it,—father had a gray hair in his head, and did not know of it! Even so. Take care of it. It is a lesson-keeper put into the book of your life. It is a ticket which entitles you to a seat amongst the elders!

### 308. How to Account for Human Existence.

"How is the existence of man to be accounted for? I would know something of human life—how it came to be, and how it will develop in ages to come. Can *Nature* tell me? Does the light know the secret, or will the winds whisper it, or is it told by the voice of the thunder? No. But the Book says—God created man, created him in His own image and likeness. Now this is an answer beyond anything that mere Nature has told me. Whatever be the value of it, in the mean time it is certainly such a testimony as creation has not given me. What shall I do with such an answer? Let me take it to my consciousness, so to speak, and ascertain how far it meets the wants of the heart. Is there, then, about me anything Divine? Am I conscious of a nature superior to everything about me? Is there a royalty which says, I am greater than the sun? Is there a hunger which cannot be appeased by the products of earth? I know there is,—it is not a lesson I have learned from the outside, it is a truth which is inwoven with my very constitution. There are instincts of lordliness in man which are to be accounted for, and the answer which the Book gives (whatever may be its value) is that man was created in the image and likeness of God."

### 309. Commercial Panic.

Look at a time of commercial panic, business distress, when no man knows whom to trust; when a smile upon

the countenance may be but the signal of intended treachery; when the greatest houses are crumbling at their foundations; when things which were of value yesterday are of no value at all this morning; when men's hearts are quaking because of the fear that they dare not touch their own fortune lest it should prove itself to be gilded nothingness,—when they are afraid that the very glance of an eye will pierce their possessions as lightning might and utterly wither them away. Man cannot be satisfied then without the supernatural; he may even drift into superstition. But into the invisible he will go, if so be he be not an utter beast, and have not lost his power of reasoning and his power of hope in the mammon worship of a misdirected life.

### 310. The Charms of a River.

A RIVER has special charms for me—always arriving, always departing; softening the landscape, and completing the circle of the firmament; rich with manifold reflections, and eloquent with the sad yet soothing minor in which all Nature speaks in her gentlest moods. I love to tarry by the river-side, to look, to listen, to wonder, and to feel the pleasant unrest of constant expectation. Standing by a river, one seems to be on the edge of another world—life, motion, music—signs that tell of speed, gliding and darting, that look as if activity had solved the mystery of industrious repose; breaking bubbles that hint at something of incompleteness and disappointment; occasional floodings and rushings that tell of power under control,—all are seen in that flowing world.

### 311. Different Ideas of the World.

To some men the world is, of course, everything; they have but one little world in their tiny universe—of course they are bound to make the most of it; to the man who is the temple of the Holy Ghost there is a great, and indeed immeasurable universe, in view of which this speck of dust,

on which some men would live for ever, dwindles into its proper insignificance.

### 312. The Doings of Christianity.

WHAT has Christianity done? It has greater testimony than the commendation of its deep scholars and eloquent preachers. It has opened prison doors, broken down bad governments, aided all good causes, lifted up trampled honour and virtue; it has saved men's souls, given men's lives higher elevation, changed death into a beneficent liberator, and turned the grave into the last step towards heaven; it has made selfish men benevolent, harsh men gentle, timid men heroic, and sad men happy; it has blessed the cause of freedom, succoured the efforts of charity, upheld the claims of peace. It demands to be judged by its fruits, and its demand is reasonable and ought to be irresistible.

### 313. A Stopping-place on the Road to Judgment.

"COME now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." This is a stopping-place on the road to judgment. We are told that God will come to His judgment throne and sit upon it, and gather all nations around His feet. But before ascending that solemn elevation, He sits down on the throne of reasoning, of conference with His creatures, and says, "I must talk with thee; I must give thee an opportunity of hearing thyself upon this question, because I know that it is impossible for any man to talk out his reasons for doing wrong without, in the very act, convicting himself; and such conviction may come to penitence and contrition, to shame, to broken-heartedness. I therefore propose to all the rebels in My human kingdom, to come to Me and to reason their case in My hearing." What does He intend! Does He intend to take advantage of our slips of the tongue? Is He listening to us as a keen and unsparing critic, who will be down upon us if we make one slip in grammar, or one misstatement of the

case? Is He not rather there partly as our advocate? If it be possible to speak a word in our favour, which we ourselves have forgotten, will He not drop it in as we are going on with the case? He will. Judgment is His strange work, and mercy is His peculiar delight. He, therefore, asks us to state the case, and His own purpose is to mingle judgment with mercy, and to meet us at the extremest possible points of His own law and righteousness.

### 314. All Right. Go!

WE have taken our seats, we have shown our tickets, and now the porters and officials begin to talk between themselves; they let us alone now, and you will hear up and down the train the cry, "All right!" Whistle! Go! I must not let that lesson remain in the railway station; I must bring that out with me. It is a lesson for life. We have examination, careful processes of scrutiny, and then the word is passed one to another, "All right in front!" "All right behind!" "All right here!" and then "Go!" That is your programme in life, young man, if you are wise. Know where you are for, take your seat, show your ticket, ascertain you are all right, and then GO ON! Many people can tell where they are for, where they want to go; and they can take a seat, and they can show a ticket, but there is no "go" in them. Few people have courage to go. Don't go before you are all right; but, being all right, go! Have you a new thought, have you examined it, weighed it, tried it by the standards of the sanctuary? Yes. Then go and tell it. Have you a high and noble sentiment?—are you sure about it? Yes. Then go! Have you a deep, earnest conviction that you ought to speak upon this subject or upon that? Then go! The train would stand still there for ever but for the command to go. It is not enough to be right as to your destination, right as to your position, right as to your certificate, there must be that moving power in you that goes with perseverance, and that attains its end.

**315. Good Intentions.**

A MAN may be seeking his own desires, and deluding himself with the promise that after he has realized them he will turn his success to the advantage of the Christian cause. He says, that when he becomes rich, which he intends doing with the utmost possible speed, the Christian treasury shall never be allowed to decline; he boldly says, that when he builds his palace the Christian advocate shall never need a home; he does not hesitate to declare that when he has attained wide social influence, everything that is good shall have the fullest advantage of his reputation. All this sounds very well, but let us take care lest we be deluding ourselves, and be actually losing the very spiritual power which is necessary to the realization of those high promises. By such delusions as these the devil is clothed in the costliest purple, and passed into the man's life as a guest sent of God.

**316. True Life Hidden.**

OUR true life is hidden; it is in God's keeping; it is never seen drawing water from this world's muddy wells, nor eating the base food of the beasts that perish; it lives on the living word, it draws water from the wells of salvation; it has meat to eat that the world knoweth not of.

**317. Looking for Technicality instead of Life.**

If men be looking for technicality where they should be looking for life, they resemble thirsty travellers who will not drink of a well until they have read the faded inscription which tells how it came to be a well at all. What say you to such travellers? For many a day they have wandered along the dusty road; their lips are parched with thirst; yet, when they come to a well of water, they ask who dug it? Who enclosed it? What families have drunk of it? Through what districts the water flows, or through what strata it rises? The questions may not be altogether with-

out importance, but life is more important to all, and dying nature ignores every one of them, until its burning thirst has been quenched. Now, Jesus Christ was as a well of living water, and the men who were around him were thirsty; yet those men put their small questions, and started their small objections, it being of more importance that their notions should be satisfied than that their lives should be saved; and, blame them as we may, they were not the only people who have sacrificed the living present on the altar of a dead routine, or rejected a spiritual Saviour because He was not also a temporal King.

### 318. A Geometrical Mind.

WITHOUT love there can be no true manifestation. It is so with reading books. All authors are not the same to us; we must take something to an author before we can get from him all that he will give. The Stones of Venice must be hard reading to a man who cares nothing for Gothic, Byzantine, bases, jambs, and archivolts. Shakespeare is uninteresting to the man who brings nothing of the dramatic in his own nature to the interpretation of the great poet; such a man will flee to Euclid's Geometry, as to an ark of refuge. Yes, even geometry itself insists upon the application of the same law. Euclid is dull reading to the man who does not love mathematics; but, to him who has, so to speak, a geometrical mind, even straight lines and circles are apt to become things of beauty.

### 319. Our Quiet Olivets.

I BELIEVE in a man having a place of private resort for the consideration of all the bearings of his life. I have had such places ever since I could remember. I have occasion to go back to them, in recollection, with joy and thanksgiving. Places in far-away quiet fields, where I used to go between school hours and bend my knees behind some blossoming hawthorn hedge, or some old, old tree, and there, as a mere boy in his teens, talk to God till the tears

started, and life seemed to be going out of me in one great painful shudder. But oh! the sweetness of those hours! One came back even to play and enjoyments of a boyish kind, and work, and suffering, with new life and new hope.

### 320. *Magnetically Discerned.*

YONDER are two men who have undertaken a mineral survey. It has been supposed by some people that there is iron in the field which these men are now traversing. One of the men is a mineralogist, a man of science, who knows the limitations of his condition, and who consequently avails himself of instruments which science has supplied. The other is a grand man, who believes that if he cannot find things out with his naked eyes and his naked fingers, that nothing can be found out or shall be found out. Not at all a bigot, you observe. A man of latitudinarian spirit, of all-encompassing and all hopeful charity; belongs to no sect, to no flag, to no banner, with no passwords, and does not believe in anything that is dogmatic or defined. He goes over the field, does this latter man—he soon goes over it. Men of that kind have nothing to arrest them on their way; it is a pity they were not winged, that they might get away sooner. Having gone over the field, he says, "There is no iron there!" But the scientific man is walking slowly over the ground, holding in his hand a little box, a little crystal box, walking slowly, watching the instrument that is enclosed in that box. Presently the needle dips. The man stops there, and says, "In this place there is iron!" Can you see it? No. Can you touch it? No. But in this place he repeats, "I tell you there is iron!" He walks on again. The needle is perfectly steady: yard after yard the needle is perfectly steady and still, but suddenly the needle dips. As the finger of God it points out to men the riches of the earth. The other man has gone home to tell everybody that there is no iron in that field, and, of course, being an independent, free-minded, experienced man, he is instantly believed by every one. The other man says, "There is iron in that field, and in my judgment



it will repay digging for." The scientific man then digs for iron and finds it, and then turns round to hear what men have to say about him and his discoveries. He says, "The naked eye, the unassisted faculty, cannot receive it, neither know it, for it is magnetically discerned." We then say that he is very clever, and tardily yield him the confidence which he has so richly deserved.

### 321. A True Test.

WHAT is the one decisive sign by which we may know whether we have received the Holy Ghost? Is it to be a mere sentiment, an impression upon the mind, a religious hope; or is it to be something more decisive, emphatic, and incontrovertible? Do you ask a question? I am prepared with a reply. What is the one decisive sign that a man has received the Holy Ghost? Let me approach that question through two others. Have you received the poetic spirit? How do you prove it? Not by prose, but by poetry. Have you received the heroic spirit? How do you prove it? Not by cowardice, not by craven-heartedness, but by adventure—by freely encountering peril in all its thousand forms and possibilities of visitation. Have you received the Holy Spirit? The decisive sign is love of holiness—not power of theological debate, not only contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, not only outwardly irreproachable character, but love of holiness—not reputation, but reality; a heart that pants after the holiness of God—life concentrated into one burning prayer to be sanctified, body, soul, and spirit—life a sacrifice on God's altar—that is what I mean by saying that holiness is the one decisive test of our having received the Holy Ghost.

### 322. Miniatures of God.

TELL a man that there is a being seated above the stars mighty and glorious—yea, who is terrible in strength and dazzling in splendour—and you have told him nothing

worth hearing. <sup>u</sup> Your statement is void by generality. God is all that. But to be all that, so that it may have any good effect upon man, He must be less than that. Upon the sphere of His infinitude there must be points of love. Man cannot get hold of infinitude. He must have something that he can lay the hands of his heart upon. God must give miniatures of Himself, which little children even can put away in the hiding-places of their love as their chief jewels.

### **323. Working from Love.**

I SAW a man watering the roads this morning. He was very careful where he began and where he ended. Three hours afterwards a heavy shower of rain fell, and it blessed the whole neighbourhood with its impartial benediction. Thus it is with law and grace; and thus too it is with people who work from the point of duty and the nobler people who work from the point of love.

### **324. Living in Units.**

How life depends upon single events! We may say, the old man's life is bound up in the life of Benjamin. There are individuals, without which the world would be cold and poor to us all. You may say, He is but one of ten thousand, let him go,—she is but one of a million, why care so much for her? We live in ones and twos. We can't live in a countless population. We live in an individual heart, a special individual, personal love and trust. I cannot carry immensity! I can only carry a heartful of love.

### **325. The Word of Christ.**

I BELIEVE in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; His word is the best witness of its own power; it touches life at every point; it is most precious when most needed; it goes into our business, and lays down the golden rule; it follows us in our wanderings, and bids us return; it is always pure,

noble, unselfish, unworldly; it gives us a staff for the journey, a sword for the battle, a shelter from the storm, and in the last darkening hour it gives us the triumph of immortality. This is the witness of ten thousand times ten thousand histories. I do not wonder at worldly or dead-hearted men calling this declamation: to *them* it is declamation; to them, indeed, it is madness; yet can we, who have known what it is to have Christ coming to us through all our sin, say of a truth that, when we are most mad, we are most wise,—the ecstasy of love is the reason of faith.

### 326. Selfishness.

I NEVER knew a man yet who made much ado about Christian people's inconsistency who was not—more or less subtly, it might be, with more or less of self-concealment of purpose in the matter—seeking excuses for his own deficiencies, or seeking from his criticism of other people's vice to make his own virtue the more conspicuous.

### 327. Danger of Riches.

It is possible for a man to attain the very highest point of success in this world, and yet for his soul to maintain its rightful supremacy,—possible for a man to stand upon the great mountain of his worldly honour possessing perfect integrity of spirit and high enjoyment of Christian blessings. At the same time, are we not given to understand by Jesus Christ Himself that to be rich is to encounter one of the most subtle and mighty temptations that can assail the soul? "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" To have an overflowing abundance of this world's goods, never to know the pang of hunger, or the crying of a desire that cannot be satisfied so far as this world can meet it, is surely to be walking as it were along the edge of an abyss, to be proceeding along a line on either side of which there are depths that have never been measured,—yet it is possible to have this

world's goods and yet to know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. What I condemn is the determined resolution of any man at all risks and all costs to be rich ; it is of course quite possible that he may succeed to the fullest extent, yet when he has succeeded he will find that he has gone down in soul-quality, in the measure of his manhood, in the delicacy of his spirit ;—success is failure ; victory is defeat ; the prize is ruin !

### 328. Moral Mastery.

As the material universe is under God's control, so will the human body be under the control of the human spirit, where God dwells in the heart. As in nature we find occasional outbreaks of storm—as the winds now and again threaten to rock the world and shake it out of its place—as the volcano bursts forth in devastating fire—as the sea roars tumultuously, so there may be in our bodily experiences proofs that we are yet in a region where the enemy has some power over us ; yet as God sits above the floods, and controls all the forces of creation, so will He give our spirit ability to overmaster all the agitation and turbulence which show that even yet we are more or less strangers in a strange land.

### 329. Two-sided Men.

SOME of us are two men. Joseph was two men. He spake roughly unto his brethren. He put it on, he assumed roughness for the occasion. But if you had seen him when he had got away into his secret chamber, no woman ever shed hotter, bitterer tears than streamed from that man's eyes. We do not know one another altogether. We come to false conclusions about each other's character and disposition. Many a time we say about men, "they are very harsh, rough, abrupt ;" not knowing that they have other days when their very souls are dissolved within them ; that they can suffer more in one hour than shallower

natures could endure in an eternity. Let us be hopeful about the very worst of men. Some men cannot cry in public.

### 330. Our Wants Numberless.

DOES not one man require in his own experience the whole scheme of Divine redemption? Is it not with this as with the light, the atmosphere, and the whole mechanism of the world? Were there but one man upon the globe, he would as much require the sun, the summer, the harvest, as do the millions who now exist upon it.

### 331. Pleasures of Memory.

MEN are poor when they give up the great memories of the soul. It is one of the most blessed enjoyments of the Christian life to fall back upon hallowed recollections, and to summon them to our aid in anticipating a future on which there may rest somewhat of the shadow of doubt or fear. Men can say, this day I was ruined in trade; this day I undertook a most important commercial engagement; this day I fell under the power of a terrible disease; this day I came into possession of great riches—blessed are they amongst whose recollections is the transcendent day on which Jesus Christ set up His kingdom in their hearts.

### 332. Sapless Men.

THERE are men to whom the point of heroism is for ever inaccessible; they wish to be let alone; they cannot bear what to them is an irritating and tormenting energy on the part even of their best friends; they will not expose themselves to the drudgery of civilization; they are content to find heaven in their couch, and to worship before the dreary altar of a sleeping Divinity. You know such men perhaps in considerable numbers. If the world were left in their hands, no advance would be made towards a higher state of things. Their only aim is to be quiet, to escape labour, to shirk responsibility. You never find their names on

subscription lists; you never find them taking part in any controversy whatsoever; they know not the meaning of the word "champion," and the higher word "sacrifice" is to them an impenetrable mystery; they hesitate not to describe as fools the men who are expending their best strength for the education and advancement of the world; they often indulge a sickly sneer at the expense of the noble leaders who are willing to give themselves up even to crucifixion for the world's redemption. Now it is perfectly possible for such men to have their requests granted to them; they can be let alone; they can be shut up in their ignoble obscurity;—but look at their souls! what have they of aspiration, of generous impulse, and heaven-born desire? Never having been hated, it is impossible they can ever be deeply loved; never having been cast out for truth's sake, they know nothing of the high and ennobling joy which fills the hearts of men who have been called, not only to do, but to suffer for that which is heavenly.

### **333. Money a God.**

WE brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. If you could take a five pound note with you across the grave into yonder invisible mysterious world, nobody would know what it was. You would have to explain it, and nobody would believe you. You might hold it up, and show the water-mark, and lecture upon it, and turn it round and round, and nobody could change it. Yet there are some men who practically, not theoretically, have made this money their god, and have said they will run unto this money as into a strong tower in the time of storm and flood and tempest and great trial.

### **334. Too Late!**

I HAVE seen people come to railway stations, and have heard official persons say "Too late." The train has moved on, and they have been left behind. How humiliating! How the men who are left behind begin to explain

to themselves how it was. If they had not remained to do so and so they would have been in ample time; if they had been content to have done just a little less they would have been perfectly punctual; and they begin to accuse themselves, and to increase their mortification, by the reflection that they could have helped this if they had only taken care to do so. Brethren, it is possible, in another sense, to be too late. The day of mercy is not endless. The sun of grace, once set, will rise no more. There are opportunities; we have to embrace them. And there is nothing unreasonable in this definition of time that is given in connection with religious exercises. If the agriculturist can say to the seed sower "*It is too late now!*" if the starter of a railway coach can say to men "*You are too late now!*" if the Post Office can drop its shutters and its doors, and say "*Too late now!*" what if, in a higher realm, in another sphere of thinking and of service, there should be an opportunity, definition of time and calling, and that there should sound out from the Divine spheres the utterance "*You are too late now!*"

### 335. The Descending Scale of Life.

MEN are truly little when they are little in spiritual force, in moral sympathy and tender-heartedness, in appreciation of objects that are noble, progressive, sublime. Any other littleness is but a trivial defect; this is a mortal blemish. Hear how the descriptive words go in the case of Zacchæus—*chief, rich, little!* It is possible for a man to read his life in this fashion, and to complain that it has been set on a descending scale; but it is also possible to reverse the order of these epithets, and so to get a more inspiring view of life. He will then say, not chief, rich, little, but little, rich, chief! Take care how you read your life! Some lives may be read thus—little, less, nothing!

### 336. The first Conviction.

THE first conviction that must be wrought in the sinner's mind is, that he must become liberated from the dead and

pestilent past; so long as he imagines that perhaps he can charm that past into life, and meet God on equal terms, he proves that he is unprepared to receive the redemption which has been offered to a lost world.

### 337. Deceitfulness of Riches.

MAMMON! accursed god! never satisfied, never thankful, never beneficent, thou dost slay all to whom thou dost reveal thyself! Men of business, let me warn you against this flattering and mocking money-god; he will deceive you at last; he will stir you with most exciting promises—he will show you the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them; he will throw open the doors of enchanting palaces, and give you visions of temples in which all is golden—but at last he will laugh you to scorn! Yes; he will surely *reveal* himself to you; he will grin as devils only can grin; and when you see him as he is you shall be *like* him.

### 338. Seeking Forbidden Pleasure.

THE tale is an old one. All its chapters were written in the first Paradise. We have set our hearts upon some forbidden pleasure; by night we have dreamed of its attainment; we have sat silently for hours luxuriating in happy expectation; we have woven our plans like a cunningly fashioned net; we made every gate secure; we quieted our best monitor with deadly opiates; we burned and quivered with delight,—O how sweet was to be the joy, how complete the security! We took many a stolen glance at the forbidden tree; we preferred its fragrance to all the other odours of the garden; as the crisis hastened we felt somewhat of hesitation, we trembled, we looked round to know whether any eye was upon us, we went forward a step and paused to catch the meaning of some ghostly sound that sobbed in the rising wind, we plucked up our dying courage and took the longed-for object, and then—then—what had we? The heavens and the earth became changed to us—every ray of the sun was a sword—there was poison in



every wave of the air—little children seemed to shun our presence as if hell had already laid hold upon us—passers-by escaped from our way as if our secret had been revealed to them—and we who went to gather the fruits of our own decree brought back the fiery sheaves of damnation!

### 339. The Lean Soul.

THE man on whom God's disapprobation rests withers at his very root. His mental power declines, his moral nature shrivels; he goes down in the volume and quality of his being. Think of a *lean soul*! No compass, no grandeur, no tenderness of manhood! A lean soul, narrow stunted, withered, sapless, blind, deaf, idiotic!

### 340. Knowing the Way to Heaven is not enough.

PREACHERS and teachers of all degrees may know the way to heaven, yet never walk in it, just as a man may know every detail of the railway time-table and yet never take a journey. Men who spend their lives in preparing other people for heaven, but never advance themselves towards it, may be likened to the inspectors, porters, and other railway servants, who are occupied in setting out travellers, but who themselves never see the ocean or the landscape.

### 341. Defects.

THE signature of defect is upon every character; we cannot write a complete biography of any man without having to use this word little, in one relation or another.

### 342. Braving Eternity.

GRANTED that some men may have drilled themselves into the power of laughing their way out of the world. Let us suppose—although by doing so we insult all Divine power and truth—but let us suppose that, last of all, a man could snap his finger at God and eternity and heaven and hell, and go out of the world as a merry dancer might whirl out

of a lamp-lit room. What of it? Who dare risk it? No wise man who knows life, and is sensible on ordinary affairs, dare make up his mind to be at last a fool like that.

### 343. Indolence.

I HAVE known people, intelligent, quiet, respectable, honourable people, who never yet did go. Well, there are some very nice walking-sticks indeed that never did take themselves out of the umbrella stand, and you could infallibly predict that they would be there just so at any given hour in the year. We must be something better than very nice, straight, strong, polished walking-sticks; we must go! But you say "It is pleasanter to stand still." I do not think it is—not in the long run. A man gets tired of standing still as much as of going. God meets men by extremes; He makes indolence a weariness as well as industry; makes covetousness a loss, as well as prodigality.

### 344. God dwelling with Men.

WHERE God really dwells with men there will be on the part of men *supremacy of the spiritual over the material*. The flesh will be servant, not master. Christianity indeed does not destroy human passions, but gives them a higher direction. Where God dwells in the soul, and fills the mind with heavenly light, and stirs the heart with blessed expectation, the passions will, of necessity, take their order from reason.

### 345. Death at the Banquet.

HERE is a great king: he is going to make merry with a thousand of his lords; he is going to light up the banquetting hall, and give himself up to revel, and pleasure, and madness—going to live in the light of his own splendour. And the programme opens and proceeds with marked success; there is light, there is music, there is laughter, there is joy; and just then when the effect is most splendid, a mysterious hand writes along the wall of his festal

chamber words he cannot understand. Just then the ghost gets into his banquet; that hand that nobody can touch, and whose writing nobody can read, that hand torments and destroys the pleasure of the whole scene. It was an unlikely time, but God does come in so. He comes into our wedding feast and into our merrymakings, into our holiday, in the time of our jubilation, when the silver trumpet is put to our lips, when the joy-bells are ringing around us, and when we say, Now there is nothing but gladness, and mirth, and beauty, and pleasure. He sends in that ghostly, spectral, all-tormenting hand, that "something between a thought and a thing," which makes us shiver, which chills our marrow, and spills from our palsied hands the wine of joy which we were quaffing. God comes, then, let us know, at unlikely times; comes upon the child when he is sleeping; and comes upon the great king in the time of his intoxication.

#### 346. God's Choice of Ministers.

It would appear to be a difficult lesson for the Church to learn, that God will choose His own instruments. In spite of a thousand proofs of sovereignty in this matter, the Church will stubbornly try to have a hand in the choice of ministers. Now that civilization has become a very devil to us, we say that God's agents shall not be carpenters, fishermen, tent-makers, or ploughmen. No, certainly not; they shall be sons of gentlemen, they shall have hands unhardened by labour; they shall be favourites of conventional fortune. God will not have this; He will not be indebted to His creatures. The shepherd shall be entrusted with His thunder, and the husbandman shall wield His lightnings; the little child shall subdue the dragon, and the suckling shall not be afraid of the cockatrice.

#### 347. Nature Superior to Art.

Now we are going to have a very festive day. We are going to pluck flowers and fashion them into arches, and

we shall make our arches very high, very beautiful,—and so far as the flowers go, they are most gorgeously and exquisitely beautiful. We have put up the wires; we have festooned these wires, and we say, “Now, is not that very beautifully done?” and of course, we who always drink the toast “our noble selves,” say yes. But God has only to take a few rain-drops and strike through them the sunlight, and where are your paste-board arches and your skilful working! As in nature, so in the higher kingdom of grace. As in matter He beats all your sculptors, and is in all schools infinitely superior to men, so in the revelation of truth to the heart, in the way of redeeming man from sin, in the way of sanctifying fallen corrupt human nature,—all your theorists and speculators, all your plaster dealers and social reformers and philanthropic regenerators, must get out of the way as artificial florists when God comes to us with the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley.

#### **348. Christ's Plainness of Speech.**

JESUS CHRIST always spoke plainly. He never went behind people's backs to tell them of their moral mispronunciations and their moral deceitfulness. He spoke all that was in His heart concerning those wickednesses to the people themselves, and thus He often got Himself to be misunderstood and ill-treated.

#### **349. Memorable Moments.**

MANY a time our eloquence becomes silence; our inspiration becomes a cry, a groan, that cannot be uttered in human articulation so that others can understand. You know what this is. You have had such visions of Christ as have caused you to overflow with love. You have felt love within you as a river that has burst its banks and deluged your very nature. It was by the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Your glimpses, your visions, you wished them to abide there; but no, they passed on, and yet after they had gone, their very memory was to you inspiration, strength, and heaven in pledge.

**350. God's Personality and Nearness.**

IF you want to pass through a toll-bar, and have nothing but a thousand-pound note for the payment, you are, so far as that toll-bar is concerned, as badly off as the beggar who has not a penny. A man may die of thirst even amid the billows of the Atlantic. If our god be therefore merely a distant sublimity, a bewildering dream, a creation of poetry, he is no god to us; and one day we shall be taunted by the mocking question, "Where is thy god, O worshipper of the golden mists?"

**351. The Scoffer.**

HERE is a wretch—let civilization bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness—who says to his poor wife, who is a member of the Church, because she sometimes has a slip in temper or does now and then what he does not approve, "Ah, that is your Christianity, is it? Well, if that be your church and chapel going, I will have none of it." Beast, fiend! There are such creatures to be found. They are to be found amongst men and amongst women. Oh, the unkindness, the cruelty, the heart-slaughter! It were nothing to kill a man,—stab him right through his heart and let him die. But when he is struggling towards light, towards God, and has to fight with all these demoniacal passions and influences round about, over which he seems to have little or no control,—when he just stumbles on the road and they point at him and say, "Ha, ha! that is your Christianity, is it?" that is thrice dying, that is intolerable pain! We know we are inconsistent, we know we are selfish, we cannot boast of ourselves.

**352. The Moral Sense.**

You and I might be able to hear a psalm-tune and enjoy it, but a highly-trained musician, in going into the sanctuary, might be sent nearly crazy by it, because he is so

highly trained in that department of his nature, that a wrong note, a wrong tone, a halt misplaced, a quaver wrongly directed, will instantly touch his soul—the soul which is not merely musical, but music itself. And we who were enjoying the psalmody very much cannot understand the sensitive men who are driven half frantic because one note happens to be a little awry, or not to be delivered with sufficient emphasis and expressiveness. So it is; the more a man has life in him the more he feels the presence of death—the more sensitive he is, the more he shrinks, not only from evil, but from the very *appearance* of evil, so that those who are in a lower moral region hardly understand his shrinking and revulsion.

### 353. The Last First.

It is God's delight to make the last first, and the first last; and He has always been working so as to set the stone which the builders rejected at the head of the corner. He will not have our greatness; He will not be put under any obligation by our strength. He delights to take up the straw blown of the wind, and to beat down great fortresses by the unlikely weapon.

### 354. Adaptiveness of the Gospel.

WE sometimes talk of adapting our preaching to the age in which we live, of keeping it abreast with contemporary culture, and addressing ourselves to the habits of men of taste. In all this there may be truth enough barely to save it from the charge of insanity. My deepening impression is that, however we may modify our manner, the doctrine which is adapted to all ages, to all tastes, to all circumstances, is that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Then must we be made to feel that the doctrines of the Gospel are humbling doctrines; that they smite down our natural pride and self-trustfulness, that they kill before they make alive; that out of our utter impoverishment and nothingness they bring all that is distinctive and enduring

in Christian manhood. Black will be the day, disastrous the hour, in which the Gospel is pared down to meet the notions of any men. The Gospel is less than nothing, if it be not the grandest revelation of the heart of God to the heart of man; and being a revelation, it must of necessity be clothed with an authority peculiarly emphatic and decisive.

### 355. Overcoming Temptation.

WHAT are we, if we have not struggled against evil,—if we have not proved our manhood, given to us of God, on the battle-field? You are tempted to put forth your hand and steal; and ere you touch the forbidden property, you thought of God and recoiled, and you are now the stronger man for temptation overcome.

### 356. Influence of Imagination.

LIFE that is lived entirely in the imagination is lived wastefully. We are not to condemn imagination, for most truly imagination is a Divine gift; but it is a gift which is seldom, if ever, to be exercised alone. Our imagination must take counsel of our judgment, and our judgment must act in co-operation with our heart, so that there may be unanimity in all our faculties in carrying out the great projects of life. It is a terrible thing for any man to be given over to the unrestrained dominion of his fancy. Our imagination becomes intoxicated, and we are the victims of dreamings which may lead us into the wildest excesses, causing us to overlook all social claims and all Divine obligations, and to work only for our own aggrandizement and strength.

### 357. Progress.

Now, are we in the line of progress, are we as far on as our opportunities have enabled us to be; or are some of us still lingering far behind? Have some of us turned back to the beggarly elements? Have any of us sought to reconstruct the Temple of Solomon, and to revive the wondrous drapery

and adornments in which priests were then decorated; or are we getting on becoming more spiritual, freer of the material, closer to the Divine nature?

### 358. A Man's God.

WHAT is a man's god? A man's god is whatever is the supreme object of his admiration and trust. It may be beauty, it may be strength, it may be money, it may be fame, it may be self-righteousness, it may be self-confidence.

### 359. Falling into the Hands of God.

It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. When He smites it is that He may recover; when He puts his sword through a man it is that He may slay, not the man, but the disease that is in him; when He is sharpest with us there are tears in His eyes; when He punishes us most terribly, when He takes away the one ewe lamb, and barks the fig tree, and sends a blight on the wheat field, and turns our purposes upside down,—it is that He may *save the man*. When men criticize us and are harsh with us, by reason of their incompleteness their criticism often degenerates into malice. When they point a finger at us, it does not always indicate a fault, but oftentimes a triumph over an inconsistency.

### 360. Mock Heroics.

It sounds very well, I have no doubt, to some of you young men, when a man says, "I intend to walk according to the light I have, and to take the consequences." Believe me, the man who so speaks, talks in mock heroics. There is nothing in his statement that ought to deter you from investigation, or from anxious and devout pursuit of truth. I repeat, we are responsible not only for the light we have, but for the light that is offered to us. If you go into some dark chamber and say you can find your way about well enough, and I offer you a light before you enter the apartment and you refuse it, and trust to your own power to



grope your way in the dark ; if you should fall into some mischief or be tripped up or thrown down, so as to injure yourself, who will be to blame ? You walked according to the light you *had*, but the light that was in you was darkness ! Your injury will be associated with a memory of neglect on your part, which, when the injury itself is healed, will yet be a sting in your recollection and your heart.

### 361. The Widow's Mite.

It is almost a pity that the widow gave the two mites, because her example has had a bad effect. Many people give the mites, who would be shocked if they were called widows. They are very sharp at seeing one side of a case, but perfectly blind as to the other. The other Sunday I announced that ministers and widows were not expected to give to the collection. Never were so many widows made at a stroke ! "The Nile's proud fight" was not to be named with it as a domestic devastation.

### 362. God has a Heart.

GOD has a heart. He is not an infinite Jove, inaccessible to our cries and unsusceptible to moral impression or emotional excitement. He can be grieved ; He can be pleased ; He can be moved to anger ; He can stretch out His hands and cry all day to the sons of men, as mother never cried in the passion of her love !

### 363. Sceptic Notions of God.

WE are invited by the tempter to believe that, even assuming the existence of God, it is impossible to find any record of His will ; He has never spoken to mankind ; He has set forth no outline of human duty ; He has written no word for human comfort ; He has shed no light on the darkest questions of life ; He made us, but He takes no notice of us ; He fashioned us as we are, upright, above the beasts of the field in dominion as in skill, but never opens the gate of the city wherein He dwells to bid us welcome to the

hospitality of His love ; He never bends down to see how His children are going on ; and never, never—though He sends down the light and rain, and breathes across the universe the healthful winds which bring life upon their wings—does He send any message to any creature of His hands. The man who can believe that, has a truly capacious and terrible faith ; he must be a very monster of a believer ! He must. His soul, if he has one, must be a bottomless pit of credulity ! Before I yield my hold of the Book at his bidding, I must know *to whom shall I go ?*

#### 364. Obscurity the Pedestal of Renown.

MAY not Renown have Obscurity for a pedestal ? Do not the pyramids themselves rest on sand ? What are the great rocks but consolidated mud ? We talk of our ancestry, and are proud of those who have gone before us. There is a sense in which this is perfectly justifiable, and not only so, but most laudable ; let us remember, however, that if we go back far enough, we land, if not in a common obscurity, yet in a common moral dishonour. You, parents, may be nameless, and yet your children may rise to imperishable renown. The world is a great deal indebted to its obscure families. Many a giant has been reared in a nameless habitation. Many who have served God, and been a terror to the wicked one, have come forth from unknown hiding-places.

#### 365. After Death.

CHRISTIAN revelation tells you that death is not the end of your life ; it tells you that death is dispossessed of its power ; that, as a believer in Jesus Christ, God the Son, you will pass from this poor weary scene into sanctuaries where there is no sin, and into activities which never tire the servant. It speaks of deeper studies, of holy mysteries, of higher engagements, of divine delights ! It speaks with hallowed rapture of reunions, of immortal fellowship, of battles blest with complete and imperishable victories, of hope perfected

in extatic and cloudless vision! If you believe in this revelation you draw water from the deep, cool well of its promises; your suffering becomes a joy through the support of its rich and inspiring grace.

### 366. Secret Communion with God.

HAVE you ever employed one hour of your life in stating your case in secret to God? I have done so: and oh! the crimson faces I have had—oh! the tottering knees—oh! the pain of self-conviction and all but damnation of self-torture! You know what it is to talk to yourself? Talk to God. Go directly and immediately to Him; speak to the Invisible. It does a man good to be apparently speaking to nothing,—speaking into the air, as it were, but with the holy consciousness that God is there, catching every tone and every sigh, every aspiration and every desire! Will you try that experiment of stating your case to the invisible Father,—the present but unseen God? You can only do so in solitude.

### 367. Judge by the Highest Possibilities.

THINGS are not to be judged by their meanest, but by their highest possibilities. A man may be able to clean a boot, but if he be also able to paint a picture the time which is spent upon the boot may be time wasted. You may be able to carve a face upon a cherry-stone, but if you can also teach a child to do all your carving, however exquisite, it is but a proof of your frivolousness. What are we doing with ourselves? Are we living along the line of our highest capabilities, or consulting the conveniences of the passing moment? Who can think of a fruit tree being cut down to help a man over a brooklet, when the meanest gate-post would have done just as well? Yet there are men who are lying down in the dust when they might be exerting the most beneficial influence upon society. "Aim high, for he who aimeth at the sky shoots higher far than he who means a tree."

**368. Wantonness.**

HE who can wantonly destroy a bird's nest may one day cruelly break up a child's home. We cannot always stop our wantonness just when we please. We are all apt scholars in a bad school, and learn more in one lesson there than we can learn through much discipline in the school of God. The little tyrannies of childhood often explain the great despotisms of mature life. Is not kindness an influence that penetrates the whole life, having manifold expression, alike upward, downward, and laterally, touching all human beings, all inferiors and dependants, and every harmless and defenceless life? .

**369. Greatness of God.**

INTELLECTUALLY the idea of God is a *great* idea. It enters the mind, as sunlight would startle a man who is groping along a path that overhangs abysses in the midst of starless gloom. The idea *God* cannot enter into the mind, and mingle quietly with common thinking. Wherever that idea goes, it carries with it revolution, elevation, supremacy.

**370. Unity of the Church of Christ.**

WHEN an enemy arises to make an attack upon the Christian citadel, when he writes a book against Christ, or against the Bible, or against any aspect of Christian truth—who answers him? Not one denomination in particular. No. When a hand is lifted up against the Cross, who seizes it? Not one section of Christendom. No. When an assault is made upon Calvary, the whole Church, in all colours, all attitudes, rushes to protect—what indeed requires no defence except as a sign of love—the Cross of Christ, which sets itself above the storms and outlives the puny assaults of puny men!

**371. God a Necessity.**

THE existence of God lies at the foundation of all religion. You cannot have a religion if you have not a god. Your god may be made of wood, but still he is to you a god. You may worship the rising sun, and that fact makes the rising sun to you as God. The Pagan has a god as well as the Christian. He who gives up God, gives up religion.

**372. Wrong is Indefensible.**

No man can vindicate wrong by reason. Every man who has a bad case to defend, must in the first place blink his own common-sense, insult his own sagacity, and quash his own sense of right, before he can defend himself, or defend the evil action of another. That is something to know. That is a bold proposition to make, even in the court of reason—not in the court of religion, distinctively so called. No man can make out a good case for wrong. He must evade many lines of obligation; he must trifle with the plain and spiritual sense of many terms; he must hurry over many very difficult parts of his case; he must depose his conscience; he must hoodwink his sagacity; and then, perhaps, he may do something confusedly and wickedly in the defence of some questionable action of his life.

**373. Eye-glasses v. Spectacles.**

It must be acknowledged by all candid minds, however anxious they may be to make the least of physical infirmities, that there *are* objections to spectacles which do not apply to eye-glasses. In the first place, they daily cause their unhappy owners to light a candle, and sweep the house diligently till they find them. In the next place, they are open to the ruinous charge of being antiquated, they tell of vanished youth and wasted powers, and impart to the opinions of their owners a decidedly fusty and mouldy air. They have, too, an awkward way of dipping

themselves so deeply into their cases, as to compel their proprietors to waste time in fishing them out with a pin. It is different with an eye-glass; it dangles gracefully on the manly breast. It can be picked up and turned round and round so as to assist mental operations. It can be pointed with much variety of signification towards an interlocutor when an argument is being inconveniently pressed. It can hide confusion, and by requiring many little delicate attentions can assist its owner nicely around corners.

#### 374. Great Workers.

ALL the great workers in society are not at the front. A hidden work is continually going on; the people in the shade are strengthening the social foundation. There is another history beside that which is written in the columns of the daily paper. Every country has heroes and heroines uncanonized. Let this be spoken for the encouragement of many whose names are not known far beyond the threshold of their own homes.

#### 375. The Changes of Life.

WE have seen the train move away, the station is cleared, the passengers have departed. Is that all? No. In five or six hours there is a cry. Men look into every carriage window, and say, "All change here!" Yes, "All change here!" That is a cry—a pathetic and saddening cry, that comes over our life sometime or other. We are boys at school—all so glad and happy; we make work-day into holiday; we pledge eternal friendship to one another; we shall never cease to think about each other's welfare, and to care for each other's prosperity! And, having made a vow of this high kind, a voice comes to us, and says, "All change here!" and our school is broken up. We part, with the best intentions to see one another again, and help one another, but there is no renewal of the friendship of happy school-days; we "change;" we see one another no more. And then there is a time when families get

together in the sick chamber, and the physician comes to look at his sick patient, and by the shadow on his face, by the shaking of his head, he says—says mutely, but not less pointedly, “All change here!” Yes; the father dies, the property is sold, the survivors take their way in life; widowhood and orphanage are now new names and new phases. “All change here!” I dare say there may be people in the world who can change fifty times a day, and care nothing about it; but any man who has a solemn view of life, and a tender heart, cannot look at these changes without putting to himself the question, “Is there not some high moral monition in these alterations and re-arrangements of society? If so, what is it? Let me take heed to it.”

### 376. Music an Inspirer.

To some men (men, indeed, who are to be sincerely pitied) music is nothing; it does not come to them with interpretations which could never be expressed in common words; they are lost in what, to them, is a terrible discord—the clash of instruments, the throbbing of great drums, the roll of stupendous organs, the blending of many voices—to them it is all confusion, without spirit, without figure, without signification. To others, music is as a voice from heaven: in the grand compositions of the masters they see as it were the very spirit of music walking upon the wings of the tuneful wind, and beckoning them away to higher scenes and nobler delights than earth can afford. How is this? Music will not visit the silent chambers of the soul that gives it no loving invitation; music, on the contrary, will never cease to sound in the hearing of those who pray that her voice may continue to soothe and inspire them.

### 377. Different Aspects of Life.

THE Christian and the worldling are not, as they ought not to be, able to look upon the events of life with the same composure. The worldling must, of necessity, live

in a constant state of alarm, because he is exposed to the mercy of what he calls accident, chance, misfortune. The Christian, on the other hand, by reason of taking wide views of things, by reason of associating himself with that which is infinite and absolute, enters into a profound and imperturbable peace.

### 378. The Climax of Troubles.

How some of us are worn down in soul and heart and hope. It is not because you have had taken away one thing; but because that one thing happens to be the last of a series. The great hammer that fell on a block of marble and shivered it,—did that blow shiver it? No. It was blow upon blow, repercussion. No one stroke did it, though the last appeared to accomplish the end. Some of you have had many sorrows. You think you cannot bear the sorrow that is now looking at you through the dark, misty cloud. You are saying, "I should pray God to be spared that sorrow. I have had six troubles: I cannot bear the seventh." Not knowing that the seventh trouble is the last step into heaven! Is there no answer to this difficulty of human life that will give satisfaction to souls? There is one answer. There is a Comforter which liveth for ever.

### 379. Love the Revealer.

WE must begin with love, the love which comes of earnest *desire* to know that which is heavenly, and then, in due time, will come a still tenderer affection.

### 380. God's Presence in the Heart.

WHEN God is showing Himself in the heart, there are many signs of His presence. In our deepest intercourse with the Father our souls enter into an ecstasy in which language is felt to be powerless. You cannot have God in your heart without knowing that He is there. You cannot always explain, in common language, how it is that you are assured of His presence; yet there are flashes of light upon



your mind, there are surgings of love in your heart, which tell you most unmistakably that you are enjoying immediate fellowship with the Father and His Christ.

### 381. The Cross—a Great School.

“NOT our will but Thine be done.” That is the lesson, but where is the school in which it can be learned? Is there such a school? Yes. The school in which this great lesson can be learned is called the CROSS! There is no other school in which this lesson is taught. Men may try to reason themselves into it; men may try by fine philosophy to come to a point of resignation that shall yield them high advantages; but all their labour will be in vain. We must be slain on the Saviour’s Cross; we must enter fully into the pain which our Saviour endured; our hands and our feet must be nailed to the accursed, yet blessed tree; the very last desire of our selfishness must be extinguished, and then shall we come into the joy and the infinite peace of walking with God.

### 382. Love—the Test of Manifestation.

GOD has not set up an arbitrary test of manifestation, He has taken the common course of our life, and given it applications to Himself. I might challenge the worshipper of *Nature* to say whether his god does not demand precisely the same condition of manifestation? The mountain is saying, If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him; the sun holds the same language, so does the sea, so does every leaf of the forest.

### 383. The Unprofitableness of Stolen Property.

TO-DAY there are persons who are practising on the weakness of dying friends, urging and teasing them to make disposition of their property, driving them with the whip of a pitiless and determined selfishness. Will such people have any enjoyment of the property so stolen? Can they spend profitably the gold which they have wrung out of a dying

hand? Never! It will go from them without advantage; their wealth will be their poverty; and in their own turn they will be robbed and laughed at. This is being done every day; the schemer is being fastened in his own net; and God's hook is thrust through the nose of the ravenous beast which fattens himself in the churchyard.

### 384. Where is the Rich Man's Soul?

THE man who starts life with an idea that to *be rich* is the highest result of labour. All his plans are laid accordingly. He lives that he may be rich; at night he dreams of wealth; all his inquiries have direct reference to the accumulation of property; when he reads, it is that he may more perfectly instruct himself in the art of money-getting; and what if, after devoting the whole strength of his manhood to this one object, he should succeed? Would it be very wonderful if a man who set himself night and day to the attainment of one object, especially such an object as money-getting, should succeed? The conquest of a world of mud, a mere handful of dust, ought not to be so very tremendous a difficulty to any man who resolutely bends himself on achieving it. The man whose case we are now supposing does succeed; after twenty or thirty years' labour he pronounces himself a rich man: *but look at his soul!* I know of no poorer man than he who has nothing but gold. What is he but a magnificent shell? What has he for his barren universe but the empty cavity of the golden calf which he has spent a lifetime in fashioning? He is afraid of the shortening days; he is afraid of his servants; he is afraid of thieves by night; he is afraid of the telegraph and the post by day; any wind that arises may blow away his property; he has no mental resources; he is afraid to be alone: look at him in this condition, and learn how wealth itself can be the most distressing poverty with which a human creature can be afflicted.

**385. Temples of the Holy Ghost.**

WE have distinctly set before us the highest possibility in spiritual life—the possibility of being temples of the Holy Ghost, of having fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and of being made partakers of the Divine nature. This thought should silence the clamour of all earthly appeal to our affections, and give us the true idea of our susceptibilities as children of God. We can do the daily business of life, yet through it all can have shining upon us the most holy and transfiguring image of the Son of man; we can be in the city of men, yet hidden in the sanctuary of God; our feet may be in the dust, but our heads among those who worship day and night; we may carry with us Him whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God. So being and so doing we are no longer of the world; we are only waiting to pay it back the dust it lent us, and then we shall be free of it for ever.

**386. Justice *v.* Forgiveness.**

FEW men can rise beyond mere justice. Many men find in mere justice all the moral satisfaction which their shallow natures require; they cannot see that mercy is the very highest point in justice, and that when a man stoops to forgive he becomes a prince and a king and a crowned ruler in the house and kingdom of God. It requires all that God can do to teach men this: That there is something higher than the law of retaliation, that forgiveness is better than resentment, and that to release men is oftentimes—if done from moral consideration and not from moral neglect—the highest form of Christian justice.

**387. Affection develops Character.**

YOU can never know a man deeply until you love him. If you wish to know what is in your friend, sound his depths by entrusting him with more and more of your friendship. As flowers expand in the sunshine, so character discloses

itself under the genial radiance of trustful affection. All character, indeed, does not reveal itself in the same way, but some men, and probably the grandest men, do not show themselves fully except under the influence of love. We may make many happy conjectures concerning the disposition of men; by putting one thing and another together which we may have seen in their character, we may come to some tolerably correct conclusion regarding the life of those whom we carefully study; but to know a man deeply and truly, to know him as he knows himself, we must test him by our own love, we must develop him by the fulness and reality of our special trust.

### 388. The Result of Dealing Lightly with Sin.

To deal lightly with sin is actually to commit sin. To tell lies to one another, by way of modifying each other's guilt, is a method which carries its own condemnation.

### 389. But One God.

IF we think that God is one among many,—that there be many solaces and many sources of strength in human life, and that God is but one of them, even the chief of them,—He will not show the lustre of His face, or the grace of His heart to us. We must come to Him as men who can say, "We have tried every other source of strength and consolation, and behold; they are broken cisterns that can hold no water. We have consulted other physicians; we have spent all we have upon them, and have become worse rather than better; now we come to Thee, God of salvation, God of grace, that we may find healing and recovery."

### 390. The Inspiration of Romantic Scenery.

I SHALL not soon forget standing upon a very lofty and magnificent hill, amidst some of the most romantic and impressive scenery in Britain. It was summer noonday. A spirit of rest seemed to be upon everything; the eternal hills were talking to me, and the great gray rocks, which

might have been the tombstones of centuries, were standing there, witnesses of my youthfulness and comparative insignificance. I enjoyed the scene as if it had been the house of God and the very gate of heaven. But there came upon it half-a-dozen wanderers, laughing and jibing and exchanging their poor vulgar jokes with one another; and when they got upon the hill-top one of them said, "What have we come up here for? there's nothing up here." He was right, there was nothing for him there. He was a trespasser and ought to have been arrested as a criminal; he was out of his sphere; give such people sandwiches, and barrels of beer, and dancing bears, and brass bands, and then the scene would have been "worth going to." But the eternal hills spake not, and the grand old majesties of the rocks were silent! They have nothing to say to vulgarity, and rudeness, and boisterousness. Incline thine ear and they will speak to thee; be calm, be struck with wonder and reverence and intelligent admiration in their hoary presence, and the hill-tops will tell thee many a story of the past, and the rocks will have sermons upon their rugged faces graven there by the hand of Time!

### 391. Desiring God.

THE desire after God does not begin on our part. God has not hidden Himself from man for the purpose that He might allow His creature, His lost child, to cry after Him. We love God because He first loved us. If we desire God, it is because God hath first desired us. God asks for our heart as His tabernacle; He surrounds us night and day with tender, pathetic appeals; He says, "If any man love Me, I will come in, and make My abode in his heart." He plies us, as mother never plied her prodigal child to come home again; and there is not one word of grace, or pathos, or tender entreaty, which He has withheld from His argument, if haply He might find His way, with our glad consent, into our heart of hearts. Do you desire God? It is because God first desired you. Do you feel kindlings of love towards

Him ? Your love is of yesterday ; His love comes up from unbeginning time, and goes on to unending eternity !

### 392. Superficiality.

WE are invited by the spirit of the times to dwell on the surface. To dig deep is to go against the age. To think about foundations is to think away from the importunity of custom. The young man of to-day must take care, or he will descend towards narrowness and poverty of character. All skaters are not navigators. It is one thing to skim over a frozen pond, and another to sail upon the troubled deep. A bottle is not full because it bears a label. The chaffering sparrow has as many wings as the eagle, but he cannot dip them in the same burning glory. A swaling candle is not to be mistaken for a comet. Men do not find in mushroom-rooms the beams of which ships are built. We must distinguish between things that differ.

### 393. Man a Riddle.

O MAN, thou art thyself a riddle, but half answered ! What is the secret of thine own life ? Explain the secret of thy desires, thy restlessness, thy ambition, thy hunger which cannot be appeased by the stones and the dust of this world ! Hast thou seen thine own soul ? Where is it ? What is its image, and what is its nature ? Are there not secrets in thine own blood and life which have never spoken to thee ? Are there not spaces in thy hidden being on which the candle of finite knowledge has never thrown its dim ray ? Canst thou stop the throbbing heart that is within thee, and say to it successfully, "Tell me thy secret, let me know what it is that is in thee ?" The heart has stopped. *Can you start it again ?* You can touch it ; you can put your finger and thumb upon it ; *can't you start it into action again ?*

### 394. Carefulness v. Neglectfulness.

It is possible for a man to be very careful of his horse, and to hold the comfort of his servant very lightly. Are there

not men who would not on any account break up a bird's nest, who would allow a poor relation to die of hunger? Birds' nests may be preserved, merely as a matter of taste, without the spirit of kindness entering at all into the preservation. What if in all our carefulness for dumb animals we think little of breaking a human heart, by sternness or neglect.

### 395. Undiscovered Truth.

IF Isaac Newton likened himself to a child on the seashore, gathering a few pebbles brighter than the rest, and humbly said that the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before him; who are we that we should set ourselves up in mid-water and say, "We see the other side of the sea."

### 396. God Manifesting Himself.

THE man of average education and intelligence may ask some such question as this: *How is it that God does not show Himself more clearly to us than He does, and so put an end to all uncertainty concerning Himself?* I answer: Are we capable of understanding what is and what is not the proper degree and method of Divine manifestation? Have we so proved our own wisdom as to be justified even to ourselves in saying that we are competent to judge how far God has manifested Himself, and how much further He ought to have done so? Every day, as a matter of mere fact, we do convict ourselves of making mistakes in the commonest affairs of life. Each day is marked by its own particular mistake. Each day, too, is stained by its own special sin. We are always going too far, or not far enough. If we are just to ourselves, we shall apply the scourge of self-reproach to our heart and understanding every day. Are we, then, with all these mistakes, like so many wrecks lying about us, are we, after all, the men to say *how* God should manifest Himself, and *when* He should do so? Is it *decent* that we should take upon ourselves this high task of

dictation? Is it becoming in men, who cannot certainly tell what will happen in one single hour, that they should write a programme for God, and appoint the way of the Almighty?

### 397. Different Ways of Finding God.

MEN find God in different ways. Some find Him in great pain and affliction: and others never would have found Him but for fire and loss and death and desolation! Others have been drawn to Him by the kind ministry of loving parents, or brothers, or sisters. There is an infinite variety in the details, but there is no variety in the principle.

### 398. Heart-life.

MAN has a heart-life as well as a hand-life. It is upon the heart-life that God looks, and upon it that He pronounces His judgment.

### 399. Intense Lives.

SOME men live intensely,—their lives are short, but the measure of their service is complete; they do not pause, they have no Sabbath days, with an unwise prodigality they expend their whole force within a brief hour. Such men are not always just to society. A rich man has no right to give so profusely as to cut off the occasion of liberality in others. The strong man ought not to be at liberty to do so much work with his own hands as to render unnecessary the labour of others.

### 400. Sincerity.

WE love sincerity. Without sincerity life is but a mockery, the worst of irony! *But what are we sincere in?* Have we ascertained that the object of our sincerity is real, true, and deserving of our confidence? We are responsible not only for the light we have, but for the light we *may* have.



**401. Who by Searching can Find out God ?**

You are very clever ; you want to know all about God, and you have turned your back upon the Almighty, because your little questions are not answered ; why can't you just take hold of that little heart that has stopped its beating, and say, "Begin again." There is a man with blighted reason. Why don't you go and breathe a new summer upon the man's brain ? There is a brain in which reason has lost her way. Why don't you find the poor wanderer and set her in the right course again ? If you can't do that — *who are you*, I say, that you should determine the measure and the method of Divine manifestation, and pronounce dogmatic opinions upon the sovereignty and the government of God ?

**402. The Will for the Deed.**

WE cannot put all that is in our heart into our hand. We may give but two mites, yet may have heart enough to save the world. We may not be able to lay one stone upon another, yet we may have built a temple unto the Lord in holy purposes or loving dreams. Truly God takes the will for the deed, and then speaks of it as if the deed itself had been accomplished in more than the fulness and beauty of the projector's intention.

**403. Theology not Religion.**

It is one thing to have an interest in scientific theology, and another thing really and lovingly to desire God for religious purposes. It is possible, as you are well aware, to take an interest in the human frame, to be ardent students of physiology, and yet not to have one spark of benevolence towards humanity, individual or social, in our hearts.

**404. The Faithfulness of God.**

Is God all-mighty ? Then be assured that the throne of right shall stand upon the ruins of all wrong ; but here

God is apparently at a disadvantage, because you cannot kill evil with the sword. The abolition of evil is a work of time, requiring the combination, the conspiring of innumerable moral influences and educational forces : but that conspiring is going on. The Lord is not slack concerning His promises, as some men count slackness.

**405. Great Trials herald in Great Blessings.**

ABRAM is called to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and, so far, there is nothing but loss. Had the call ended here, the lot of Abram might have been considered hard ; but when did God take anything from a man, without giving him manifold more in return ? Suppose that the return has not been made immediately manifest, what then ? Is to-day the limit of God's working time ? Has He no provinces beyond this little world ? Does the door of the grave open upon nothing but infinite darkness and eternal silence ? But even confining the judgment within the hour of this life, it is true that God never touches the heart with a trial without intending to bring in upon it some grander gift, some tenderer benediction.

**406. The Glory of Christianity.**

THE great appeal which Christianity makes to the world is this : " I come to make human life freer, grander, purer ; I come to open worlds in which human life can be more perfectly developed ; I come to set man towards men in the relation of brother towards brother ; to dry the fountain of human sorrow ; to break the chains of human captivity ; to dispel intellectual and moral darkness, and to bring in an unending summer day : " and any religion that comes with a profession of that kind, even were it nothing more, will, *primâ facie*, demand to be heard as possibly for God.

**407. The Mercy of God.**

THE man who knows himself to be in the right, who feels himself to have a just cause in hand, is always the first to

make the noblest propositions, and to offer as many concessions as are possible without impairing the law of absolute right, truth, and propriety. And so, it is in an infinitely higher degree true in the case of Almighty God. He makes the proposition to His rebel. After man has committed high treason against His throne and court, after he has done his best to snap the Divine sceptre, and insult the Divine honour, after he has made himself a disgrace in creation, God says to him, not, "I will cut thee in twain with My glittering sword; I will put My foot upon thee and crush thee into the dust, and defy thee to get thy life again;" but He says, "Come now, let us reason together."

#### 408. The Mystery of Darkness.

WE know how easy it is to reduce everything to the mystery of darkness, and to suppose that because we can't see, therefore all things that are declared to be in existence cannot possibly be where they are said to be. When night comes down upon us, and the sea is covered, and the great rocks around our coast are all hidden, what would you think of a man who said, "There is no sea; there are no rocks; there are no mountains. I deny it; I swear there is no sea!" What is your reason for doing so? "Why," he says, "if there was an ocean, should I not see it? if there were rocks, would I not behold them?" He forgets that he is surrounded by conditions that have obliterated to his vision the facts which he so emphatically denies.

#### 409. Judge by the Works.

IF a man said he was eloquent, how would you judge him? By the number of books he had read, or by the number of schools he had attended? Certainly not. If he never moved you to tears, or compelled your consent to his reasoning, or excited you to enthusiasm, his pretension would be nothing but a barren name. On the other hand, there may be a man who has not read a book on eloquence, who could not give you a single canon in rhetoric, yet

when he opens his mouth your attention is caught as by a spell, his strong, earnest, pathetic speech, though perhaps broken and inexact, carries everything before it. Do you hesitate to pronounce him an eloquent man? You judge by the "works,"—you believe him for the very works' sake, and you are unquestionably right.

#### 410. Delay not Failure.

GOD says, To-day I will work a wonder in your eyes; ye shall see marvellous things; I will beat down the proud throne and the great mountain. He says that, and then leaves us there. And a thousand years go by; the proud throne is still there, and the great mountain rears its shoulders through a thousand summers and a thousand winters. Men say, "The word has been forgotten." But the word is there. It is a factor in human history, and is working, and will work. It may be in ten thousand years the word comes up, and the men of the day say to one another, "All this is done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet."

#### 411. Children's Destiny a Puzzle.

CAN you, even the most sagacious of parents, say concerning your little boy, "This boy was born to —," and then indicate his destiny? Your boy is a puzzle to you—a mystery to you—an unsolved problem. Even in your most sanguine hours, when you see a beauty in the child that other eyes cannot detect, even then you can only say, "I hope this boy will turn out something good." You cannot say more. "I hope he will become a clever man, a wise man, a good man." There you end. Beyond that you cannot go. Even your affection hesitates to go beyond that. But here is a Child with His destiny emblazoned on His forehead. As a *Child*, He comes with this declaration, "To save from sins." You say about a child, he is born to the throne of his country; he is the heir-apparent, or the heir-presumptive. You say about the rich man's child, he

is born to a great fortune, but there is a *perhaps* in all those cases. There is a parenthesis in all these statements, and in all such parentheses lies the possibility of failure and ruin. But here is Jesus Christ the Child, not developing into a Saviour, not after many years turning out into something like a great redeeming life, but a Child come for this express purpose, and but for this purpose never would have come at all.

#### 412. Conduct should be Based on Reason.

A MAN's conduct ought not to be a haphazard thing, but ought to have under it a basis of reasoning, of moral unity, and of understanding of the right relations of affairs. A man ought to be able to say *why* he does this, and *why* he refrains from doing that. He ought not to be living from hand to mouth, just doing what happens to come up first, without knowing *why* he does it. He ought to be able to say, "I will not drink of that cistern;" he ought also to be able to give his reasons for avoiding it. He ought to be able at the end of every day to vindicate to himself, to his own understanding and self-respect, the course he has proceeded upon in business or otherwise during the whole day.

#### 413. The Plan of Salvation Perfect.

Is God all-wise? Then His plan of salvation is complete and final, and we shall waste our strength, and show how great is our folly, by all attempts to improve the method of redemption and recovery of the world. What is there of God's we can improve? Will you go out to-day and find any little plant that spring has thrown down already in the face of winter, and improve it? Try it. You can surely make something more out of a primrose than God has made. You could amend the buttercup and the daisy. Try it. I shall not take you up into the higher realms, but we will just keep on the grass, and see what we can do down there. Is there a blade of grass in all the meadows of the earth we can

improve, looking at it as God constructed it, not as it has been withered and destroyed in any degree, but as God made it. Can you improve any one thing that God has made? Then why seek to improve the method of salvation which He has set up according to the revelation of His Holy Book, in the person and through the ministry of His Son?

#### 414. Mediation.

Now, what is the meaning of this word mediate, mediation, mediator? You find it in the New Testament; what is the explanation of it? Suppose that your father has been very angry by something that you have done; and suppose you are so ashamed of having done it that you dare not look your father in the face; you would rather go ten miles than look at him. You know you have done wrong, and that he has a right to be very angry with you indeed, and so you say, "I dare not look at him; I cannot go to him." And suppose your sister should come to you, and say, "Now you have done wrong, and your father is very much grieved indeed; he is full of just anger; and yet I do not like to see you and him separated in this way—don't like to see you in this condition of dishonour, and fear, and trembling, being afraid of your own father's face. I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll go and speak to your father for you, and I'll tell him you are very sorry, and that if he will forgive you you will be very glad, and you will come and throw yourself at his feet, and ask his pardon. Now, I'll do that;" and your sister goes away to your father, and explains the case, and asks his pardon, and tells how sorry you are, and asks him to see you, and talk the thing over with you from beginning to end, and see if you cannot both get together again. What is your sister? She is a mediator; one who stands in the middle, who goes first to one, and then to the other.

#### 415. The Result of Faith in God.

IN so far as I take the Christian view of God, I have quietness of heart; I have REST; I say God is on the

throne ; all these great forces are under His control. He presides as king and ruler. To whom, then, shall I give the sceptre, if I take it out of His hands. Where shall I find rest, if I give up this faith in God ? Not only does it give me rest, it gives me HOPE. When I see confusion, I say, God is working under it all ; and by and by something beautiful will come out of it.

#### 416. Atheism Self-contradictory.

THE tempter asks you to give up the idea of God, which you have derived from the Scriptures. Well, *what then ?* Remember, you refuse to give up the humblest cottage, until you know where you are to go ; you won't throw away the poorest covering in winter until you know what you have in return ; you won't, on a dark road, put out the dimmest lantern until you are sure of having a better light in its place. Will you, then, recklessly give up the idea of God at the bidding of any man—the idea of the living, loving, personal God, ruling over all—without asking, “To whom shall I go ?” You can put away the mystery of God, and you get in return the greater mystery of *godlessness*. Your account of creation is then neither more nor less than a fool's account. A *chair* could not have made itself ; but the *sun* is self-created. Your *coat* had a maker, but your *soul* had none. The wax flower on your table was made, but the roses in your garden grew there by chance. The brass instrument was fashioned by a skilled hand, but the voice of man, the grandest of all organs, was self-created. The figure-head on the ship was carved ; but the face of the carver became a face by chance, without design and without law !

#### 417. Judge not by Appearances.

JUDGE not realities by appearances. Let me point out to you a most thriving and prosperous man, whose case will explain exactly what I mean. There is no question that in trade he is very successful. Let me see. He keeps a gig ?

Yes. He keeps a wagonnette too, does he not? Yes. He drives into town every morning as well? Yes. And generally has a flower in his button-hole? Yes. His name is seldom seen on a subscription list, and he makes but a poor figure amongst the charities which are popular in the circle in which he moves. He is called stingy and mean: people say sharp things about him when his back is turned, and as for that unlucky gig of his, it is favoured with criticism enough to cut the axle-tree in two: people say, "And *him* riding in his gig!" It is bad grammar, I know, but wonderfully fine emphasis! Appearances are no doubt against the man. It certainly does look stingy on his part when he puts down five pounds after a man in the same station has put down fifty. It is enough, I admit, as human nature goes, to bring the gig, and still more the wagonnette, into contempt, and as for the flower in the button-hole, it is as beauty wasted on a beast. In using this vigorous language I am but quoting,—do not, if you please, mistake it for original composition. The object of all these severe remarks never heard one of them, and if he heard them all, I question whether he would do more than smile forgivingly. If he cared to speak he could make a good speech on the subject, I know. Shall I tell you what materials he has for a vindication? He would never tell you himself, so I may as well let you into the secret, lest you too judge him unjustly. His gig and his wagonnette are not merely ornamental, they are useful in his business, and are kept for use rather than for show, though of course they must be seen. The flower in his button-hole would be there if he lived in a mud hut in Norway, not perhaps so nice a one, but a daisy or a primrose, for from childhood he has loved any kind of flower he could get hold of. You saw him putting down five pounds just now, and you thought the figure looked shabby without a cypher at the end of it; but you don't know that last year he paid a thousand pounds of his father's debts, for his father, though an honourable man, had been ruined in business; nor do you know that only this morning, on which he gave the



despised five pounds, he sent a cheque for fifty guineas to his two sisters, and that he sends them a cheque of the same value four times in the course of every year; nor do you know that he is paying for the education of two brothers, and that he is laying by what he can afford to give them a nice start when they are ready for business. All this you hear now, for the first time, and in the light of it both the gig and the wagonnette acquire a new respectability, and even the shabby five-pound note is of more value than the fifty sovereigns of some other man. Judge not, that ye be not judged! The Lord looketh on the heart!

#### 418. Beneficence of Law.

DID we but know it, we should find that all law is beneficent; the law of restriction as well as the law of liberty. The law which would keep a man from doing injury to himself, though it may appear to impair the prerogative of human will, is profoundly beneficent. Was not man to have dominion over the fowls of the air? Truly so, but dominion is to be exercised in mercy. Power that is uncontrolled by kindness soon becomes despotism. Power belongeth unto God,—unto God also belongeth mercy; this is completeness of dominion, not only a hand that can rule but a heart that can love.

#### 419. Destruction easier than Creation.

It is infinitely easier to ask questions than to answer them, and to pull down than to build up. This must be one of the earliest lessons which the earnest student must learn. Never forget it. The rule applies to every department of life, but bears with especial force upon the highest questions which engage the mind. Is it not easier, for example, to *waste* money than to *earn* it? Is it not easier to *spoil* a picture than to *paint* one? You can pluck a flower from its stem, but can you put it on again? With the rudest hammer you can injure the sculptured marble; but can you shape any stone into beauty? These inquiries, made in

the lower region of life and affairs, point towards the doctrine, that it is easier to tempt a man than to save him ; easier to ruin life than to train it for heaven !

#### 420. Man of Necessity a Free Agent.

WHY did God make man capable of falling ? Because God could not have made man upon any other condition : He made the sun incapable of falling, and all the stars incapable of falling ; but the moment you pass from matter to life you multiply your danger ; increased life means increased risk.

I drive a nail into this piece of wood to hold some article until I return for it ; I also request a child to watch another article for a time. On my return I find the nail where I put it, I also find the child where I left him ; do I say to the nail, " You are very good for doing what I wanted to have done ? " Certainly not. But I may say to the child, " You have been good, and I thank you for doing me this kindness." But why not express my thanks to the nail ? Simply because the nail had no will in the matter. The child *had* a will, and could have foregone his charge ; and by so much as he could have broken his promise he was honourable in keeping it. But put the case the other way. Suppose that on my return I discovered that the child had abandoned his position ; then I should see that in passing from matter to life I pass from comparative certainty to probable uncertainty ; yet even the bad child is greater than the nail, for his capacity of badness is also his capacity of goodness.

#### 421. False Christs.

MANY false Christs have gone out into the world. The Christ that was born in Bethlehem has now to compete with the Christ born in the poet's fancy, carved out of an ideal humanity, or developed out of a benevolent sentiment. This noble, simple Nazarene has been left behind somewhere, probably in the temple, or has passed through so

many guises that the characteristic lineaments have been lost. This circumstance is a significant feature of the spiritual civilization of the day. Deepest and truest among its lessons is the doctrine that man must have a Christ. There has ever been a motion, a gravitation, more or less palpable, towards a man who should be the complement of every other man; and who, by the perfectness of his manhood, should be able to restore and preserve the equipoise which universal consciousness affirms to have been disturbed or lost.

#### **422. The Formation of Habits.**

ARE our habits to be formed without reference to their social influence? Remember that children are looking at us, and that strangers are taking account of our ways, and that though we may be proud of our strength, they may be lured from righteousness by a licentiousness which we call liberty. Am I then to abstain from amusements and delights, which I could enjoy without personal injury, lest a weaker man should be tempted to do that which would injure him? Precisely so. This is the very essence of Christian self-denial. Perhaps a man may say, in self-excuse, "I am so little known, or of so little account, that my example can do no harm to any one." Is it to his credit that, as a Christian man, his example is of so little moment? If he had been more faithful to his Master, in the circle in which he moves would he have been so little known? The very fact of his not being known as a Christian man, may itself constitute a very heavy charge against his fidelity.

#### **423. First Thoughts the Best.**

LEARN from the action of Pharaoh's daughter that first thoughts are, where generous impulses are concerned, the only thoughts worth trusting. Sometimes we reason that second thoughts are best thoughts; in a certain class of cases this reasoning may be substantially correct, but, where

the heart is moved to do some noble and heroic thing, the first thought should be accepted as an inspiration from God, and carried out without self-consultation or social fear. You who are accustomed to seek contribution or service for the cause of God, of course know well what it is to encounter the imprudent prudence which says, "I must think about it." Where the work is good, my friend, don't think about it; *do* it, and then think. When a person comes to your place of business, and turns an article over and over, and looks at it with hesitation, and finally says, "I will call again," in your own heart you say, Never! If Pharaoh's daughter had *considered* the subject, the probability is that Moses would have been left on the Nile or under it.

#### 424. Old Age creeps gradually.

BEFORE you can see the hymn some Sunday you draw your hand over your eyes, and put the book a little nearer or a little farther off as the case may be. What is the matter? Nothing! Oh, no. Nothing! Pass your hand over your eyes once more, and all will be right. No! So you change your hymn-book. You can no longer read nonpareil type, but you think you can manage with brevier leaded. In a year you will want bourgeois; then you will ask for small pica middle leaded; and then you will want brevier Egyptian. At first you will buy yourself a smart eyeglass, for whose use you will half apologize to your friends, and by-and-by you will settle down to the use of any kind of spectacles you can lay hands upon! So we ripe and ripe, and so we rot and rot! We slip down the easy incline, and know not how far we have slipped until we are told to take care lest we slip off.

#### 425. The Omnipresence of God.

THOUGH the heavens cannot contain the Great One, yet He hides Himself under every flower, and makes the broken heart of man His chosen dwelling-place. So great, yet so condescending; infinite in glory and infinite in gentleness.

Wherever we are, there are gates through nature into the Divine. Every bush will teach the reverent student something of God. The lilies are teachers, so are the stars, so are all things great and little in this wondrous museum, the universe !

#### 426. The Danger of Infidels.

A MALICIOUS man can do more mischief in one hour, than a man of genius can repair in a lifetime ! Let a ruffian have his way for one night upon any minster or abbey which was slowly reared through generations and centuries, and in the morning you may find it a smouldering heap ! So with your infidels in their limited world ; wherever they go they leave the mark of the beast, and their course may be tracked by the desolation which they leave behind.

#### 427. Adaptation.

EVEN in secular affairs we work by laws of proportion and adaptation. If a man employed a steam-engine to draw a cork, we should justly accuse him of wasting power. If a man spent his days and nights in carving cherry-stones, we should say he was wasting his life. We have a common saying—"The game is not worth the candle,"—showing that in common affairs we do recognize the law of proportion, and the law that results do determine the value of processes. If, then, in the *lower*, how much more in the *higher* ! Think of a being like MAN spending his lifetime in writing his name in the dust ! There is a success which is not worth securing. Suppose a man should get all the *money* he can possibly accumulate, all the *fame*, all the *luxury*. What does it amount to ?

#### 428. Present Benefiting from the Past.

THERE are some results of goodness we inherit independently of our own will. This age inherits the civilization of the past. The child is the better for his father's temperance. Mephibosheth received honours for Jonathan's sake.

The processes of God are not always consummated in the age with which they begin. Generations may pass away, and then the full blessing may come. We are told that some light which may be reaching the earth to-day, started from its source a thousand years ago. What is true in astronomy is also true in moral processes and events; to-day we are inheriting the results of martyrdoms, sacrifices, testimonies, and pledges which stretch far back into the gray past of human history.

#### 429. Art—a Miraculous Conception.

THE Spirit had to move upon intellectual chaos, and now all orderliness, or beauty, or music, is attributable to his power. The grim spectre of traditional orthodoxy may shudder at the notion; yet, rather than pronounce the genius of civilization atheistic, it may be more reverent to describe it as a conception and production of the Divine energy operating through human instrumentalities. The excess of difficulty is on the side of atheism, not of inspiration. On such a subject men are not required to be more orthodox than the Bible itself. Moses hesitated not to say that the Lord had called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and had "filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, and to devise curious works, to work in gold and in silver and in brass, and in the cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of wood to make any manner of cunning work." Art is thus set among the miraculous conceptions, and civilization is robed as a worshipper in the outer court of the Temple. Still we have not a *man* who claims in a peculiar sense to have God's life in his veins. We have seen God in heart; can we see God in blood?

#### 430. Fatalism.

WE must not be sensible in ordinary affairs and insane in higher concerns. Were your servant to tell you that she is

fated to be uncleanly in her habits, you would instantly and justly treat her with angry contempt. Were your clerks to tell you that they were fated to come late to your bank every morning, and go away early every afternoon, you would justly treat their statement as a proof of their selfishness or insanity. Were your travelling companion to tell you to make no attempt to be in time for the steamboat or the train, because if you were fated to catch it there would be no fear of your losing it, you would treat his suggestion as it deserved to be treated. Yet men who can act in a common-sense manner in all such little affairs as these, sometimes profess that they will not make any attempt in a religious direction, because they believe in the doctrine of predestination or fatalism.

#### **431. Religion a Daily Experience.**

RELIGION should not be an originality to us ; it should not be a novel sensation ; it should be the common breath of our daily life, and the mention of the name of God in the relation of our experiences ought to excite no mere amazement.

#### **432. The Influence of Christ's Life.**

THERE is round about us an influence so strange, so penetrating, so subtle, yet so mighty, that we are obliged to ask the great heaving world of time to be silent for a while, that we may see just what we are and where we are. That influence is the life of Jesus Christ. We cannot get clear of it ; we hear it in the tones of joy, we feel it stealing across the darkness of sorrow,—we see it where we least expect it,—even men who have travelled farthest from it seem only to have come round to it again ; and while they have been undervaluing the inner worth of Jesus Christ, they have actually been living on the virtue which came out of the hem of his garment. Yes ; it seems we must touch him either at the heart or the hem,—if we will not have him for the soul, we must have him for the body.

**433. The Expansiveness of Theology.**

**THEOLOGY** contains all that is true in art and in science as well as the doctrines which apply to our highest capabilities and aspirations. An ancient saint looking upon the ploughman and upon the sower, and observing how they prepared the earth to bring forth and bud, that there might be bread for the world, exclaimed, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." The true physician is inspired of heaven; so is the true poet; so is the true painter; so also is the true preacher. We must not narrow theology until it becomes a sectarian science; we must insist that within its expansiveness are to be found all things and all hopes which minister to the strength and exalt the destiny of human life.

**434. Respect for Religion.**

**THERE** are men who seldom open their Bible, who rejoice in the Biblical knowledge of their children: so with Sabbath-keeping, church-attendance, and the choice of companions. They have more than a merely outward respect for religion, yet its redeeming mystery has no place in their hearts! They admire, but they do not repent.

**435. The Universal Spirit v. The Local Christ.**

**TRUTH** is larger than fact, so the spiritual is larger than the material, the Holy Spirit greater than any personal manifestation possibly could be. The incarnate Christ was local, the Holy Spirit is universal; the fleshly Christ was a Jew, the Spirit-revealed Christ is the brother of every man; the embodied Truth walked within certain geographical limits, but the spiritual Truth is unlimited in range, and inexhaustible in power. The Apostle says that "henceforth we know not Christ after the flesh;" now He is represented by the Holy Ghost, still head over all, though unseen by men.



**436. A Word to Children.**

YOUR father was deeply religious,—will you inherit all he has given you in name, in reputation, in social position, and throw away all the *religious* elements which made him what he was? Many a battle has been fought, even on the funeral day, for the perishable property which belonged to the dead man; what if there should be some emulation respecting the worship he offered to the God of heaven? You would not willingly forego one handful of his material possessions; are you willing to thrust out his Saviour?

**437. Unity in Christian Labour.**

HERE is a most copious and gracious shower for the refreshing of the parched earth: the flowers are drinking in the blessing, and the earth is looking young again. What did it? Catch one of the drops, and say, Are you doing this? No. Which drop did it? No drop did it—the shower did it! So it must be in our great Christian agencies. There is no one man can do it all. God hath not appointed men so to do. He hath called us to unity, to co-operation, to banding ourselves together, to finding in each other the complement of ourselves. Every man has a sphere. Though we may have a republic, it won't mean that one is as good as another. One man is not as good as another, and one man is not as much of a man as another: he may require a larger coat, but a very small accommodation will do for his soul. It may be so, or it may not be so; and if we were all equal this moment, before the clock went round once we should all be sixes and sevens—and mainly I am afraid sixes.

**438. Development of Love.**

FROM the general kindness and simplicity of childhood we advance until the heart begins to individualize its sentiments, to concentrate its energies; by-and-by there seems to be but one life in all the world, and then begins the con-

suming passion of perfect love. Human lives grow gradually up to this. To so great a passion they must have come by wisely graduated degrees, or it would have rent and destroyed them. Still, all through there has been a consciousness of love, and in all the simple trust and generosity of young affection there have been hints of a great possibility, which only time and circumstances could develop. And this full love means, if need be, sacrifice, cross, death!

#### 439. Manhood a Guarantee of Excellence.

EVEN the *worst* man has the seal of God upon him somewhere. We must not forget that man *is* man, whatever be his creed or his status; and that his very *manhood* should be the guarantee of some excellence. The men of the world and the men of the church are God's; the barren rock is His, as is the glowing garden of the sunniest summer,—the worm crawling on the outermost edge of life and the angel shining above the stars are both under the care of God. Do not, then, speak of one man as if he were created by the devil, and another as if descended from heaven. Let us even in the worst expect to find some broken ray of former glory, as in the best we shall find some evil which makes us mourn that he is not better still.

#### 440. Do More and Be More.

WE are to *do* more, because we are to *be* more. The natural daisy *does* more than the artificial rose, because it *is* more. The poorest little child *does* more than the most elaborate marble statue, because it *is* more. The least in the kingdom of heaven *does* more than John the Baptist, because he is more. "Ye must be BORN AGAIN:" there must be a new *worker* before there can be new works: the *spirit* is the *man*.

#### 441. The Risks of Solitude.

THE self-diabolizing spirit of man always reveals itself to the lonely contemplatist, either in moments of vacancy, or

under the stress of spiritual crises. Eve was tempted when she was alone; the suicide succumbs when he is pushed into the last degree of loneliness; the darkest thoughts of the conspirator becloud the mind when he has most deeply cut the social bond: when man is alone, he loses the check of comparison with others; he miscalculates his force, and deems too little of the antagonisms which that force may excite. All these are among the risks of solitude. The solitary man either degenerates into a misanthrope and the tool of the diabolizing spirit, or he enriches and strengthens his life by reverent and subduing contemplation.

#### 442. Uniformity Impossible.

UNIFORMITY of theological creed is a simple impossibility, and as undesirable as it is impossible. The object is the same, yet the views are different; the foundation is the rock, yet each man may adopt his own architectural style; the parents may be the same, yet in stature, form, faculty, disposition, the children may be entirely different. The sun brings all manner of flowers out of the earth, varying endlessly in hue and fragrance; what if the light above the brightness of the sun bring a still more varied summer out of the winter-bound heart of man?

#### 443. Marah.

THE Israelites marched along the very road which God intended them to occupy, and in that very march they came upon waters that were bitter (the waters of Marah). Is it not often so in our own life? We have been delivered from some great trial, some overwhelming affliction which brought us to the very gates of death, some perplexity which bewildered our minds and baffled our energies, and then we have lifted up our hearts in adoring songs to the Deliverer of our lives, and have vowed to live the rest of our days in the assured comfort arising from the merciful interposition and gracious defence of God; yet we have hardly gone three days' march into the future until we have come upon wells

which have aggravated the thirst we expected them to allay. Compared with the great deliverance, the trial itself may seem to be trifling, yet it becomes an intolerable distress. Suffer not the tempter to suggest that the trial has befallen you because of disobedience. History has again and again shown us that the field of duty has been the field of danger, and that the way which has conducted directly from earth to heaven has been beset by temptations and difficulties too great for human strength. You may be right even when the heaviest trial is oppressing you. You may be losing your property, your health may be sinking, your prospects may be beclouded, and your friends may be leaving you one by one, yet in the midst of such disasters your heart may be steadfast in faithfulness to God.

#### **444. Common People.**

No statesman can afford to omit the common people from his calculation. They are the very root and core of society. Kings are only the blossomings of the national tree. The roof is more dependent upon the foundation than the foundation upon the roof. Nearly all, if not quite all, the movements which have changed the thinking, and determined the new courses of the world, have been upward, not downward. The great revolutionists have generally been cradled in manglers, and gone through rough discipline in early life. Civilization is debtor to lowly cradles; and unknown mothers hold a heavy account against the world.

#### **445. A Duty for Each.**

**THERE** was a sharp discussion the other day in a gentleman's kitchen. One speaker said to another, "I am ashamed of you; we ought not to be in the same house together; you are common and vulgar-looking, beside being scratched and chipped all over. Look at *me*; there is not a flaw upon all my surface; my beauty is admired; my place in the house is a place of honour." The other speaker was not boisterous; there was no resentment in

the tone of the reply: "It is true that you are very beautiful, and that I am very common, but that is not the only difference between us. See how you are cared for; you are protected by a glass shade; you are dusted with a brush made of the softest feathers; everybody in approaching you is warned of your delicacy. It is very different with *me*; whenever water is wanted I am taken to the well; when servants are done with me they almost fling me down; I am used for all kinds of work; and there never was a scullery-maid in the house who did not think herself good enough to speak of me with contempt." It is so with men. Some of us live under glass shades; others of us are as vessels in common wear; but we could not change places; each must do his proper work, and each will have his appropriate reward.

#### 446. No Two Men Alike.

WE are all men, and yet no two men are alike. In every history you find the great man and the little man. The poetic dreamer and the prosaic clown; the daring adventurer and the self-regarding coward; the child of genius and the creature of darkness; yet all claim to be men, and all may theoretically acknowledge the same God and Redeemer. These are facts with which we have to deal whether we open the Bible or not, whether we acknowledge a system of Divine Providence or not, whether we are atheists or saints.

#### 447. Our Religion should not be Hid.

THERE are some men amongst us of whose religion we know nothing until we are informed of the same by public advertisement. It is possible not to suspect that a man has any regard for God until we see his name announced in connection with some religious event. We cannot read this holy book without being impressed with the fact that the men who made the history of the world were men who lived in continual communion with the spiritual and unseen.

Religion is the *exception* in some of our lives,—it was the great and beneficent rule of theirs. Is it possible that your *child* is unaware that you have a God? Is it possible that your servants may be ignorant of the existence of your religion?

#### 448. The Compassion of Jesus.

Look at all human enjoyments through the medium of this suggestion. Jesus says: "I have compassion upon the multitudes,"—so I call them nightly to rest and oblivion; "I have compassion upon the multitudes,"—so I send the sun to make the earth fruitful for them, lest they faint by the way; "I have compassion on the multitudes,"—so I bid all nature work with them and for them, that they may have enough and to spare. Thus "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

#### 449. The Atonement.

THE Atonement I do not receive merely as a grammarian, logician, metaphysician, theologian. I cannot understand that Cross—great, rugged, melancholy Cross—if I look at it only from the eminence occupied by the scholar, the philosopher, the theologian. But when I feel myself in my heart of hearts a sinner, a trespasser of God's law and God's love; when I feel that a thought may damn me to everlasting destruction, that a secret unexpressed desire may shut me out of heaven and make me glad to go to hell to be out of the way of God's shining face,—then some man tells me that Jesus Christ was wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities, that the chastisement of my peace was laid upon him; and I, pressing my way through all the grammarians, logicians, philosophers, theologians, say, "If I perish I will pray, and perish only at the foot of the Cross; for if this be not sufficient, it hath not entered into the heart of man to solve the problem of human depravity and human consciousness of sin."

**450. Solitude a Necessity.**

MAN cannot reach his full stature in the market-place, or in association with the excited throng. The wilderness must form the counterpart of the thoroughfare,—great breadths of contemplation alternating with great breadths of service. This was Christ's example, illustrated most vividly at one exciting point in his history: the disciples of John went and told Jesus that their master had been murdered by Herod; the intelligence seems to have shocked his spirit with a disappointment: sickened and saddened by this tale of blood, "he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart," as if to avenge the murder upon the diabolic instigator, or to weep great drops of blood.

**451. Love to Christ All in All.**

WHAT does a newly-quickened heart, coming up out of the waters of penitence, and just about to move into the wilderness of temptation, know about the Trinity in Unity, the federal headship of Adam, the philosophy of sacrifice, or the metaphysics of theology? Probably nothing. Yet such ignorance is not incompatible with young life. Does the infant know the mystery of love when it is clasped in the parental breast? Do parents insist that their children shall study agriculture before they eat of the fruits of the earth? When a man declares that he loves Jesus Christ, he has a right to eat of the bread and drink of the cup which the Lord appointed. Love first, knowledge afterwards; with love to begin with, all else will come quietly, "without observation," yet with unspeakable joy. The heart will build up a belief as it wants it, and wear it gracefully because it is its own.

**452. Gray Hairs.**

You know what it is to find the *first* gray hair in your head? It quite startles you: in fact, it amuses you so much that you hand it around the family circle, that each

member may laugh at the comical circumstance that a gray hair has been found where a gray hair was not so much as suspected! Young people look at you with a new feeling, hardly knowing, indeed, whether to address you as a stripling or a patriarch. You have put one foot into that sombre but not unbeautiful borderland which lies between summer and autumn, and there is no going back again! All the gates are locked, and God has taken the keys away! A gray hair? It is the signature of time! A gray hair? It is the beginning of the end! It is a hint that you have lost something,—it is a flake which tells of the hastening snow!

#### 453. Esau and Jacob.

I MUST always think kindly of Esau; it would be a poor world but for such men; they give one stimulus and health, carrying one away from the scheming and tricky city to the uplands, the moors, and the forests, to the solemn minsters of nature, where the sweet hymn never ceases, and where the altar fire is never quenched. I shall not think well of Jacob, because he was a cold, selfish, wicked calculator; yet, on the other hand, if such men were excluded from God's love, and if God chose only the finest examples of human nature, how many of us would fall short of heaven! Then, think how complete is God's work—if the worst and weakest can be so far recovered as to lie at the very foundation, who can tell how splendid will be *their* glory who will be set as the top-stones and pinnacles of the temple?

#### 454. Vanity of Personal Appearance.

YONDER is a man, lofty in stature, portly in bearing, commanding in all the attributes of external person. He says that he feels a pain piercing him: he laughs, and says, "Presently it will be gone!" But that great chest of his has a second stab inflicted upon it, and back it goes, and his shoulders come up. His friends who were once proud of him hardly know him; and he says, in a voice no longer with



the old ringing tone, "Take me home." He is taken home, and betakes himself to his bed. His physician comes to his room and says, "This is a case of small-pox." "No!" "It is." Ay, and that god of his will be dug in the face till the man's mother won't know him, and the sister who loved him best will pray to escape from his presence. It may be so. God can blotch your skin! God can send poison into your blood! And you, who sneered at ungainly virtue, at unfavoured honesty, may be a corrupt worm-eaten pestilent thing in the dirt!

#### 455. Weakness the Plea for Divine Help.

THOSE who apparently have least may in reality have most. Who can tell what visions of Himself God grants to men who cannot see His outward works? Blindness may not be merely so much defect, it may be but another condition of happiness. Who can say that it does not bring the soul so much nearer God? Be that as it may, it is plainly taught that God undertakes to lead all men who will yield themselves to His guidance, and that their defects instead of being a hindrance, are, in reality, the express conditions on which offers of Divine help are founded. It is *because* we are blind that He will lead us. It is *because* we are weak that He will carry us. It is *because* we have nothing that He offers to give us all things.

#### 456. Why Christ framed no System of Divinity.

IT has often been asserted that Christ did not set down in sequential order what is known in these modern days as a system of divinity. The assertion is not only true as a matter of fact, but true as an evidence of his Godhead. The Divine, the immeasurable, the eternal, cannot be formulated. Life cannot be systematized. Architecture may, so may astronomy, botany, and all other arts and sciences. But life is not a science: the soul is not an art. Immediately that the scientific line is crossed, the power of systematizing, if not lost, is so crippled and deranged

as to be but a poor accommodation. Language itself, as partaking of the nature of a system, is often felt to be an inconvenience, useful for expressing what is uppermost, but nearly powerless in the articulation of what is deepest in the soul. Wisely, therefore, Christ wrote nothing, for written language is more difficult of interpretation than spoken language. The eye, the tone, the smile, help words that are spoken; which is but another way of saying that life is the only true interpreter. The moment that the grammar and the lexicon are called in, strife begins, and logomachy deposes wisdom. A tone would do more than all syntax, to give the meaning of some doctrines. The spoken word is life; the written word is statuary. To have come, therefore, with a written creed in quest of signatures would have been a vain errand.

#### 457. How to honour the Great.

As we cannot pay the mighty men who have covered the past with immortal renown, and who have laid us deeply in debt to their genius, their piety, their benevolence, we can only show our gratitude by noble "endeavours" to imitate their example. Our thunders of applause are nothing to those whose bodies moulder in the chambers of the dead, and whose spirits now worship in the upper light. We may stamp with tremendous approbation upon their graves, but the ear has done with hearing; we may roar our vain applause to the streaming winds, but heaven opens not to let the unavailing thunder pass. No! let us serve the living, and through them the coming ages. We may all do this. Some can throw open kingdoms of thought, others can carry the prophet's mantle; some can head the advancing army, others can lift up the wounded and weary.

#### 458. Hypocrisy, and how Unmasked.

THERE are men who say the Church is fast becoming like the world; men who will not play at this game, or go to

that amusement, or sit in this society, or identify themselves with yonder movement, because they suppose that all these things savour more or less of worldliness. Very well. One of these men who is so unworldly and so exemplary shall be heard in his tea-table talk. He says unkind words about his neighbour; slanders his minister; is a sneak when sneaking will win him what he calls success; he is a traitor when treachery will bring him thirty pieces of silver, more or less; there is no meanness he would not stoop to; there is no length of censure and censoriousness to which he will not go. Yet that man condemns another who rides on a fine horse and goes to find some of his amusement in a painted house! What is required to show the man what he really is? The Ghost of God, to show him that an unkind whisper may be murder; that a shrug of the shoulder may be incipient assassination; to take him by the heart, and condemn him in the sight of God, for a villany too refined for common morality and too subtle to be taken note of by any of the magisterial tribunals of the land!

#### 459. The Materials of Christ's Kingdom.

By going to the lowest stratum of human nature Christ gave a new idea of the value of man. He built a kingdom out of the refuse of society. To compare small things with great, it has been pointed out by Lord Macaulay that in an English cathedral there is an exquisite stained window which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master, and it was so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to tradition, the envious artist killed himself with vexation. All the builders of society had rejected the "sinners," and made the painted window of the "righteous." A new builder came; his plan was original, startling, revolutionary; his eye was upon the contemned material; he made the first last and the last first, and the stone which the builders rejected he made the head stone of the corner.

**460. Patience v. Indolence.**

WE must not drive life. Nature is not to be whipped and spurred by impatient riders. God's administration is calm. The wheels of His chariot are not bespattered by the mud of blustering and reckless haste. On the other hand, we are not to find in this reflection an excuse for the indolence and incapacity of *men*. There are stones which we can roll away. There are turbid little streams which we can bridge. There are gates which weaker men than Samson can carry away. There is the profoundest difference between the indolence of men and the eternal calm of God. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "I must work while it is called day."

**461. A Sleeping Bible.**

IT is possible to have God's Bible in the house and yet to have no revelation there. It is possible to have the Book done up in the most artistically elegant manner, and to have the utmost care taken of its polish and its beauty, and yet to have no revelation from God in the house. The Book is asleep; it looks beautiful in its slumber, but it says nothing. How is it with our Bible at home?—is it well dog-eared and thumbbed, and do the places fall out easily? It is more than a book, it is a living message, a tuneful revelation, turning our whole household life into music, and poetry, and love.

**462. Prayer—its Own Answer.**

PRAYER is often its own answer. A cry of pain is often its own cure. So marvellously, so fearfully and wonderfully are we made, that it "soothes," as the poet says, "poor Misery, hearkening to her tale,"—when she tells her tale the woe seems to diminish; when she rehearses her grief the grief seems to fly away. So with prayer; the very act of prayer mitigates the burden which rests upon our heart, the pain which kills our life. No man can pray

in vain; no man can go up to Christ the Invisible One, and speak to Him, as if it were face to face, without in the very act realizing relief and knowing the meaning of heavenly succour.

#### 463. Controversy.

I do not believe in mere controversy. I would not make a direct attack upon any false system of religion. If you would overthrow error, teach truth. Don't debate—preach. Don't fight objections—proclaim the forgiveness of sins, through Jesus Christ. Don't fight religious duels—address the deepest wants of the human heart. My idea of aggression in Ireland is not to send a hundred men to argue against the Pope's infallibility, or to abuse the ritual of the Romish Church. Let the Pope alone; let Ritualism alone; study the adaptation of the Gospel to human sin and sorrow, and preach it tenderly, with love and urgency, and you will do good.

#### 464. Doing *v.* Saying.

SHALL I tell you what I saw the other day? It made me laugh, and yet it made me sad. I saw, in one of your parks, a poor little ragged boy, who was evidently hungry, and who was anxious to appeal successfully to the pity of the public. He was met by a tall, lean, clean man, who set his long, bony fingers together stiffly and impressively, and lectured the child in very suitable language. I overheard him say, "This is not proper. You ought to have been at school; you should not be prowling about here in this way; there are places provided for such as you, and I earnestly advise you to get away from this course of life." Every word he said was grammatically correct, and socially very true. As he was delivering his frosty lecture to the poor lad, there came a boy—a school-boy hastening to school—who was carrying a large lump of bread and butter in his hand, which he was eating as school-boys only can eat; and when he saw the poor ragged child, he pulled his

bread and butter in two, put one half into the boy's hand, and went on. "Not every one that SAITH unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." That boy, who gave his bread and butter away, will stand a better chance than the ninety-nine legally upright, who apparently need no repentance!

#### 465. **Man's Extremity is God's Opportunity.**

GOD does not come to us along great broad highways of opportunity; it is when there is apparently no opportunity for Him to interpose that He shows the greatness of His strength and the infinite tenderness of His grace. It is when we say "The door is shut and the enemy is round about, and the danger is culminating," that He comes along unexpected paths, speaks to us the word of deliverance, and says, "Be of good cheer! Things are dark, and they seem to be extremely perilous. I am here, and it is in thy extremity, O man! not in the flush of thy power and the surplus of thy hope, but in thine extremity, that I appear to deliver thee and show thee the way of escape."

#### 466. **Life—a Process.**

PEOPLE may be strong and hopeful at the beginning of a project, and most effusively and devoutly thankful at its close, but the difficulty is to go manfully through the *process*. Israel was in the desert, and never were spoiled children more peevish, suspicious, and altogether ill-behaved. If they could have stepped out of Egypt into Canaan at once, probably they would have been as pious as most of us; but there was the weary interval, the inhospitable wilderness! It is so in our life. Lay it down as a solemn and instructive fact that life is a *process*. It is more than a beginning and an ending: more than a cradle and a grave. The *child* may be good, and the *old man* may be tranquil, but what of the petulant, self-willed, and prayerless *being* between these extremes?

**467. What Charity is NOT.**

CHARITY that is done on purpose, and put in as an investment, never bears any interest. If a man say, "I shall give away so much bread, in the hope that I may thereby secure heaven," God will not open the door of heaven to him. He is working on wrong principles, and doing good in a wrong spirit. These acts of charity and noble service are to be done out of the spirit, because of the indwelling spiritual grace wrought in us by the Holy Ghost! We cannot do good deeds on purpose. We cannot say, "Now to-day I shall do some very charitable actions. I shall begin at a certain hour, and continue until a certain stroke of the clock." That is not Christian life. That is pedantic benevolence, it is self-laudatory, and self-exalting charity. The noblest and most beautiful deeds are done unconsciously, and done because Christ's grace is in the heart, and the very Cross of Calvary is the centre and inspiration of our life.

**468. Love is Self-denying.**

A CERTAIN man had two sons, and both of them said they loved their father. One of them said so, loudly and boastfully; the other said so, quietly and clearly. It came to pass that their father asked both of them to do a piece of work for him. The son of many words and with the loud voice, said, "I love my father as much as any man can love him; but I want to have to-morrow upon the river; I have no time to do what he asks me to do; I have set my mind upon going on the river to-morrow, and all my plans will be broken if I do not go; and, by the way, did you not tell me that you were going out to-morrow with the field naturalists to seek some uncommon plant supposed to be in this neighbourhood?"

The other son said, "Yes, I did, and I have got everything ready for going out to-morrow; and I had set my mind upon going."

During the night the son of many words and loud voice

saw his way luckily out of the difficulty. He rose early ; went to the river to have a row : said he would be back in good time to his father's work. He meant it too ; he would have resented any hint to the contrary, angrily, and with vehement words. Away he went. The time passed quickly. He loved his father, and he said, "Well, I will do double work when I get home ; and now that I am on the river I will have my spin fully out ; I will work better for it when I do begin." He meant it too ! He would let his father see how much he loved him *after* he had enjoyed his merry spin upon the river ; yes, and *after* that all would be easy and beautiful. This was a very "lucky" way out of it. He would thus enjoy his day upon the river, and then, he said, "you see I shall be so fresh and so happy. I shall do double work in half the time, and my father will see how much I love him." The other son said nothing. It is a dangerous thing when a man begins to talk about his duties—he has lost the battle then. The moment he begins to reason about them he is a dead man. Quietly the boy did his work. He did it for his father's sake. He made no boast about his own merits. He met his brother without a boast or a taunt. He crucified his own pleasure that he might lovingly do his father's work. Which of them really loved his father ? What is love worth if it does not cost us something ?

#### 469. "Only Man is Vile."

JESUS has no difficulty with His material creation ; God has no difficulty with His suns, and stars, and comets, and planets, and seas, and winds. He would never have an hour's pain but for His children. It is His son that grieves Him ; it is His own man child, shaped in His image, lustrous with scattered rays of His degraded glory, it is he that gives God's heart pain. Jesus says to the sea, "Be calm ;" the sea crouches at His feet. Jesus says to the winds, "Cease," and they retire to their caverns. Jesus says to the heart of man, "I would save thee," and the heart says, "Thy salvation be to Thyself." The stars never mutinied against their



King ; there is no cry of rebellion in all the sobbing and roaring of the sea ; and there is not a little child in the world, that cannot strike God's love, and sting God's heart, and slay the Saviour afresh.

#### 470. **Exoitement.**

**EXCITEMENT** suspends the judicial faculty. The warrior in the midst of the battle is not in a position to judge so completely and certainly as the spectator who observes the scene from a distance. It ought to be the part of a wise and generous friendship to point out to men when they are working too much, and wasting in exaggeration energies which might be beneficently exercised through a longer period of time.

#### 471. **Christ in the Heart.**

IF I want to know if a man has the Christ of God in his heart, I do not say, "Now, *first*, what do you believe ? then, *secondly*, *thirdly*." I *live* with him ; I see him under difficulties ; I see him when the cross upon his shoulder is very heavy ; I see him when his own will is snubbed and his own way is broken up, when his wishes are all shaken at their foundations. I then say, "How does he bear it ?" I see him when he has been insulted or injured. I say, "How does he bear it ?" I see him when he meets his enemies face to face. I say, "With what port does he bear himself ?" It is then I know something of his belief ; something of the Christ that is in his heart. If he repeat the apostle's creed from morning till night, and will not forgive an enemy who has come to him, saying, "I repent," the apostle's creed will be a millstone round his neck, that shall sink him into the bottomless sea !

#### 472. ♡ **Selfishness.**

**SELFISHNESS** makes the world a very little place ; a very cold, fruitless, gloomy corner. It may appear to be a very grand thing to write one's own name everywhere as owner and

lord, but if the name be not written on recovered and thankful human hearts, it will soon be rubbed out and forgotten. Love is the only ink which does not fade; love is the only memory which strengthens with time; love is the bond which never corrodes.

#### 473. Christ in Death.

YOUR *father* could not live without God,—can *you*? Your father encountered death in the name of the Living One. How do *you* propose to encounter the same dread antagonist? When your father was dying, he said that God was the strength of his heart and would be his portion for ever. He declared that but for the presence of his Saviour he would greatly fear the last cold river which rolled between him and eternity, but that in the presence of Christ that chilling stream had no terror for him. When the battle approached the decisive hour, your father said, “Thanks be unto God which giveth to us the victory,”—how do *you* propose to wind up the story of your pilgrimage?

#### 474. Sermon on the Mount.

IT has been said that what is known as the evangelical element is absent from the Sermon on the Mount; but no misconception can be greater. Let any mere theorist attempt to “do these sayings of mine,” and he will find that through every step of the process he will require the help of Jesus Christ, and to feel *that* is to be conscious of the necessity of the evangelical element.

#### 475. Individual Selection.

THE principle of individual selection in the matter of all great ministries is in keeping with the principle which embodies in a single germ the greatest forests. It is enough that God give the one acorn; man must plant it and develop its productiveness. It is enough that God give the one idea; man must receive it into the good soil of his love and hope, and encourage it to tell all the mystery of its purpose.

So God calls to Himself, in holy solitude, one man, and puts into the heart of that man His own gracious purpose, and commissions him to expound this purpose to his fellow-men. God never works from the many to the one; He works from one to the many.

#### 476. Contradictions.

No doubt the Book does contain contradictions more or less real. So does the book of nature. The desert contradicts the garden; the storm contradicts the calm; summer and winter are utterly discordant; one plant grows poison, another is impregnated with healing juices; the savage beast and the creature of gentle blood face each other in the contradictory book of nature. The world is full of contradiction, and an intolerably insipid world it would be but for its anomalies. Every man is his own contradiction. In ten years a growing man will throw off many tastes, companionships, and habits, which to-day are pleasant to him. There is nothing without an element of contradiction but death, and death itself is the great contradiction of God. Human maxims and policies are continually at strife. Out of contradiction comes education. But what is contradiction? Not lying, necessarily—not even opposition, absolutely; contradiction may simply mean incompleteness, or may arise from ellipsis. Two gases may mutually antagonize, yet may be held altogether by a third. Two statements may be discrepant, until a missing link is supplied. A man may pursue two divergent courses of conduct, yet may hold his integrity without a breach; when smitten on one cheek, he may turn the other, and yet he may rebuke an offending brother; he may judge no man, yet he may refuse to cast his pearls before swine, or give that which is holy unto the dogs.

#### 477. Division of Labour.

MOSES was a thinker; AARON was a speaker. AARON was to be to MOSES instead of a mouth, and MOSES was to be to

Aaron instead of God. Thus one man has to be the complement of another. No one man has all gifts and graces. The ablest and best of us cannot do without our brother. There is to be a division of labour in the great work of conquering the world for God. The thinker works ; so does the speaker ; so does the writer. We are a chain ; not merely isolated links ; we belong to one another, and only by fraternal and zealous co-operation can we secure the great results possible to faith and labour. Some men are fruitful of suggestion. They have wondrous powers of indication ; but there their special power ends. Other men have great gifts of *expression* ; they can put thoughts into the best words ; they have the power of music ; they can charm, fascinate, and persuade. Such men are not to undervalue one another ; they are to co-operate as fellow-labourers in the kingdom of God.

#### 478. Goodness.

THERE is a *natural* goodness ; there is also a *relative* goodness. Some men are naturally good-tempered ; it costs them nothing to be amiable ; it would be difficult for them to be severe even in the judgment of wrong,—they would excuse it, or wink at it, or in some way escape the duty of branding it. Other men are constitutionally more generous than others. They *like* to give ; they like to lighten burdens, and to help the blind and the weak over difficult roads. This, indeed, is beautiful, charming, as are also other wild flowers often found in hedge-rows or in rocky places.

#### 479. Helping other People.

WE have only so much as we have given ; by so much as we have helped other people we have laid up reserves of strength which will give us mastery and honour in time to come.

#### 480. Christian Morality.

CHRISTIAN morality is not elaborated like a table of statistics or an Act of Parliament ; it gives the moral spirit, and

in that it gives everything that can be required. The sun will not do any gardening, but without it no gardening could be done. The dew will sow no seed, but without it seed would be sown in vain. The greater the agent, the less of detail will it attempt; the greater the spirit, the less of literal law will it dictate. So it will be found, that where the Spirit of Jesus Christ is, the morality of Jesus Christ will follow: that Spirit determines the whole course of life.

#### 481. Religion not Hereditary.

RELIGION is not hereditary. You have power deliberately to sever the connection between yourself and the God of your fathers. It is a terrible power! Let that be clearly understood; lest a man should torment himself with the thought that he must inherit his father's God as he inherits his father's gold. You may turn your face towards the heavens, and say with lingering and bitter emphasis, "Thou wast my father's God, but I shut Thee out of my heart and home!"

#### 482. Christ in the Church.

THIS is the difficulty of all the highest service of life, namely, that the spiritual is *invisible*, and yet omnipotent; public attention is fixed upon the human agent, and professions of spiritual inspiration and impulse are treated with distrust, if not with contempt, by the most of mankind. It is the *invisible* Christ who is with the Church. Were He present manifestly, it is supposed that greater results would accrue from Christian service; but the supposition must be mistaken, inasmuch as He to whom such service is infinitely dearer than it ever can be to ourselves has determined the manner of Christian evangelization. What, then, is the great duty and privilege of the Church? *It is to realize the presence and influence of the Invisible.* The Church is actually to see the *Unseen*.

**483. Eloquence.**

WHAT is human eloquence but the expression of Divine music? Pedantic rhetoricians may fashion rules of their own for the refinement of human speech, but he who waits diligently upon God, and whose purpose is to know the will of God that he may speak it to men, will be entrusted with an eloquence rhythmic as the sea, and startling as the thunder.

**484. Temptation of Christ.**

TAKE the most respected man of a given neighbourhood, a man whose honour and integrity are known to be above suspicion; and it may be affirmed of that man that it is impossible to persuade him to defraud his neighbour of a penny. The idea of his doing so would be regarded by those who knew him best as an imputation not to be tolerated for a moment. But why? The man is only human, like other men; why then this indignation at the idea of fraud? Simply because the spirit of honesty within him is too strong to succumb to such a temptation. But increase the force of the temptation; raise it from a paltry penny to ten thousand guineas, and multiply the ten by ten, and add the assurance that no human being can ever be cognizant of the fraudulent deed; and if that amount will not reach to his full moral stature, add to it according to his integrity: and thus a tremendous rival force may be set up, with which the man may find it difficult or impossible to contend. In the case of Christ, the devil pursued this climacteric course, rising from the mere satisfaction of hunger to the rule of all kingdoms. Still the Messianic spirit towered far beyond the pretentious offer. The deceiver could not attain the overshadowing height; other men had been measurable and conquerable, but this man was of gigantic structure, and his shield was impenetrable.

**485. Communion with Nature.**

IT was when the Lord saw that Moses *turned aside to see* that He called unto him and mentioned him by name. This is indeed a great law. If men would turn aside to see, God would surely speak to them. But we do not do this. We pass by all the great sights of nature with comparative indifference, certainly as a general rule without reverence. The sea wants to speak to us, but we listen not to its sounding voice; the stars are calling to us, but we shut them out; the seasons come round to tell their tale, but we are preoccupied with trifling engagements. We must bring so much with us if we would put ourselves into healthful communion with nature: we must bring the seeing eye, the hearing ear, and the understanding heart: we must at all events be disposed to see and hear, and God will honour the disposition with more than expected blessing.

**486. Is the Heart Right?**

WHERE the heart is right, the hand will be right. The stream may travel a rough course; it may be impeded, discoloured, and otherwise vitiated; but these are the accidents of the way, not the defects of the source. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

**487. Unsuccessful Efforts.**

OH! those unsuccessful efforts, how they tear the heart right open, or heap upon it burdens which are too heavy! The bravest will is battered down by them. A resolute and good-hearted girl, reading what some great women have done with their pens, sets secretly to work upon poem or song, the price of which is to give her a measure of independence, or is to relieve the pressure upon other members of the family; she writes till her ill-afforded candle expires, and writes again in the grayest light of the cold morning; the lines please her, her fancy sees many a

beauty in them, and the aching of her heart pauses under the exhilaration of a proud and thankful hope. Then comes the day of trembling expectation; the manuscript is in the hands of a publisher, and all depends upon his criticism; the mornings come very slowly; she can hardly sleep, and when she does sleep, her dreams are of her book. At last the answer comes; she hastens to some secret place to read it, and the scalding tears blind her when she reads that her manuscript is "declined with thanks;" while she was coming, another stepped down before her. At that moment, the sun cannot give her light: she feels a strange darkness settling over her whole life.

#### **488. Christ's Works a Divine Witness.**

IF the life of Jesus Christ should have wrought one result above another upon merely literary readers, it should have exposed the insanity of denying a Divine origin to Divine works. Let those who please, demand the credentials of the sun; but be it our wisdom to believe that no testimony can be so convincing as his own splendid and impartial light.

#### **489. A Place for Every Man.**

I CAN never forget standing in a great railway station, and being convulsed with laughter by a scene that occurred there. A man came into the station with a hat on which surely nobody ever did make, and with clothes on that I am sure ninety-nine out of a hundred would hardly touch, except with an instrument half a mile long, lest there might be something more than clothes; and this poor man, with his long stick and a bag in his hand, went straight into one of the finest first-class saloon carriages, lighted with gas, that was standing at the station. Unquestionably, you felt, "That man has no right there;" but then it was one of those misplacements of one's self that did not amount to giving anger or offence to anybody, but simply to the provocation of laughter; and a porter, who seemed to be



a common-sense and straightforward man, went to him at once, and without any question being put he says, "Come out here!" There is a spirit in a man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. There is a fitness of things; there is a law of proportion in society. Every man has a seat, but there is a possibility of men getting into chief seats that ought to be sitting upon stools, and though there are many first-class passengers in third-class carriages, there are, alas! many third-class passengers in first-class saloons. Still, every man ought to feel that Divine Providence has a position—a place—for him, and he ought to find that place out, or do his diligence to find it out, and to be content with it, improving it as far as he can.

#### 490. On Building Beautifully.

A MAN is not to be commended because he builds his house towards the cold north; nor is he to be praised because he chooses windows that are low and narrow, and puts them all on the shady side of the house. Dig deeply, but build so as to receive the blessing of the sun and the salutation of the living breeze. Let your foundations be strong, but don't shrink from originality of architecture.

#### 491. Penitence must precede Pardon.

PARDON can only be secured by the consent of both parties. I may have offended you. You may come to me and say, "You have deeply grieved me; but I forgive." I can snap my fingers in your face and say, "Take your forgiveness away; I don't want to be forgiven by you!" Observe, therefore, that you have not the power to forgive me. You can forgive the crime, but you cannot forgive the sinner. And even your forgiveness of the crime I may resent, and turn into an occasion of inflicting still deeper injury upon you. But if I come to you and say, "I have injured you; I see that I must have given you great pain; I did you wrong, and in my heart I am sorry for having

done so." If then you say, "With my heart I forgive you;" the transaction is based on solid moral principles, and the result is likely to be permanent and beneficent. It is so with God. God cannot pass an act of universal amnesty; He cannot open all the prison-doors of the universe and say to the criminals, "Come forth, I forgive you all." But if they in their condemned cells would but heave one sigh of penitence, and utter one cry for God's forgiving mercy, every bolt would fall off, every lock fly back, and there would be no prison in all the universe of God!

#### **492. The Old, Old Gospel.**

THE Gospel is as old as God; ancient as eternity; and as for the Cross of Christ, it was built before the foundations of the rocks were laid!

#### **493. The New Testament without a Final.**

You never can find the end of Divine revelation. The New Testament has no final page. We come to what we consider to be the end, and lo! the end is more suggestive than the beginning; and where we expected to pause we find that it is only to pause on our feet that we may stretch the wings of a higher being, and soar in the loftier regions of Divine manifestation and government.

#### **494. The Mighty Falling.**

THERE are men who can fall, and their falling seems to produce but very little vicious influence upon society. There are other men so eminent in position, so established in reputation, whose falling would seem to bring down the pillars of civilization, would seem to bring down the very fabric of God's Church! Herein is another mystery. When priests fall, and ministers play the coward and the liar, and heads of houses eat of the forbidden tree, and influential men go astray,—yet even then God interposes for the truth; He saves in society the redeeming element, hands it on from the unworthy to the successor who may be more worthy.

Thus He preserves the light of the world and the salt of the earth. So God never wants a generation to bless Him; the Redeemer has always near Him some who hold His name dearest of all!

**495. Difficulties—a Fool's Way of Meeting them.**

HERE is a man who boasts that he gives himself no concern about the difficulties of life; he takes things as they come; if they come sunnily, he gives them welcome; if threateningly, he winks at their frowning, and waits until they look better; he does not know what it is to spend a sleepless night, and as to meeting trouble half way, he smiles at the suggestion as a kind of practical joke. He is not unwilling that other people should work for him, if they are foolish enough so to do; if they have no other amusement, he does not begrudge them this innocent pastime; he expects things to be ready just when he wants them, and if they be not ready it never occurs to his well-regulated and serene mind that the blame may in some degree be chargeable upon himself. He may languidly admit that things are occasionally awkward, yet he can sing his fool's carol even in the face of the east wind, and take his sluggard's slumber on the roughest places of the bleakest road.

**496. Heart-lunacy.**

THE madness of the heart, compared with which mental lunacy is an unspeakable blessing. There are times when the soul seems to be given over to the power of the devil, when it is caught on every side, when religion itself becomes little better than a temptation to sin. Men are sometimes brought to suppose that they are doing things for the glory of God when in reality they are but heightening the crumbling pedestal on which their own little dignity is to be shown.

**497. The Destiny of Man.**

I INQUIRE: What is the destiny of man? Is he but as a leaf that buds, and blooms, and perishes? Is the grave the

full stop of this strange difficult literature of life? Can Nature tell me? Are the withered leaves the answer? To me the inquiry is intensely interesting and exciting. I have seen men die, and little children vanish like bubbles on the stream. Where are they? Where are the beings so patient in suffering, so self-oblivious in love, so self-reserved in power and joy? I ask Nature; but she is silent. I study her processes, but they are only partially analogical. I reason, speculate, and desire; amidst all this the Book says—Death is but the shadow of life; the grave is not a goal, it is but a changing-place; there shall be a resurrection of the dead; mortality shall be swallowed up of life; death itself shall die! What shall I do with this answer? Does it meet my *necessity*, does it satisfy my *hope*? It certainly does so. Nature did not touch the question, but the Book answers it with fulness and emphasis. It sheds light precisely where light was most needed, and such light I cannot allow to be extinguished. The heart would sink in dismay but for this revelation of the meaning of death, this light upon the mystery of the future.

#### 498. Religion and Intellect.

I CLAIM for religion the highest influence upon the intellectual faculties: education may, so to speak, give them feet, but religion gives them wings; and if, for a time, religion seems to abash and humble the mind, it is that afterwards it may give it a wider charter and stir it by a mightier impulse.

#### 499. Bad Actions Indefensible.

I ASK young men especially to turn this over in their minds; to consider this very soberly and carefully, viz.: *It is impossible to defend any bad action by good reason.* Understand that. You are witty, you are sharp, your power of repartee is unquestionable, but you cannot successfully defend a bad action by good reasoning. Logic is against you as well as theology. Common-sense is against you as well

as spiritual revelation. This is the strength and the majesty of the Christian faith, that it challenges men by the first principles of reasoning to defend themselves, as sinners, before the Almighty. "Oh that men were wise, that they would consider!" "My people do not know; Israel doth not consider." If men would take a few quiet hours, now and then, and look at life as it really is, and at themselves as they really are—the hour of thought might become the hour of prayer.

#### 500. Nature Ablaze with God.

WE may be hearing God without knowing it. We may in external nature be doing this. Send a clown out this morning, in all this baptism of autumnal fire, and it is nothing to him; but send a poet out, and he sees a ladder the top of which rests on the gates of heaven, and he hears in all the sunny air music and joy, psalm and hymn, and heavenly rapture; send out a man of dull, prosaic mind into the spring, and he sees nothing in it:

"A primrose by the river's brim  
A yellow primrose is to him;  
And it is nothing more."

Let the eye of an appreciative observer light upon the primrose, and it flames with the presence of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.

#### 501. Encouragement to Workers.

MY friend, thou wilt often fall before cold, searching, critical eyes, if thou dost only look on the material side of things; but know thou that all the world is God's synagogue—God's temple; and if thou art seeking to cure any poor man who may be in it, God is watching, angels are watching—none can number the watchers! Turn the eyes of the heart towards these better witnesses and defy, not with human spite, but with God's sufficiency, the watching criticisms of men who would let any poor wretch die rather than break the slightest rule of propriety, or offend the shallowest traditions of the fathers.

**502. On Preaching Fear.**

I DO not invite men to accept Christ because there is a terrible pain following the course of unrighteousness. That is not preaching the Gospel. I do not want to dwell upon the punishments that befall a bad man with any wish of drawing him from his course because of those punishments. I have never been able to preach in that kind of way. But this I do wish to say distinctly, that the bad man has a painful course before him. Do not leave it on that account! The serpent shall bite you and the adder shall sting you, but don't give it up on that account! The wild beast shall shut his jaws upon you, but don't be righteous on that account! The earth won't have you, the sea won't cover you, hell won't burn you, but don't come to Christ on that account! Be a man; "be a hero in the strife!" I do not preach that men should be good because God will lay the hand of judgment upon them. No man would turn on that account.

**503. Demands on the Ministry.**

I BELIEVE that we have had unjust and unreasonable expectations respecting the ministry. We have looked for all sorts of work from ministers; they have been expected to be eloquent preachers, popular lecturers, learned writers, acceptable visitors, skilled controversialists, successful beggars, untiring evangelists, and many other important and influential characters. This is the covetousness that tends to poverty. Let a man be one thing, and let him excel in it.

**504. The Glow of Piety.**

ONLY the liberated slave can know the joy of freedom—only the recovered leper can appreciate fully the blessing of health. Let an emancipated slave tell of the joys of liberty, and the man who has never felt the grip of a shackle will at once pronounce him a declaimer; let a recovered leper

say all he can of the delights of health, and the man who has never known a day's sickness will probably think him more or less of a fool. It is so with our preaching, or with our true Christian living; it is not set in the common key of the world; it cannot be judged by the rules of carnal criticism; when it is praised as regular, thoughtful, prudent, let us beware, lest under these flattering names be hidden a deep, yet almost unconscious apostasy.

#### 505. Sensationalism.

Is it not high time that there *should* be sensationalism? Have we not been troubled with indifference long enough? Has not Jesus Christ become a merely historical name in many quarters? Terrified by the impotent bugbear of sensationalism; hushed into criminal silence by the possible charge of sensationalism; frightened into holes and corners lest anybody should cry "sensationalism;" living tamely, dastardly, shamefacedly, because there is such a word assensationalism! Is this manly on our part, or true, or just, or grateful? If this be sensationalism, how comes it to be so? Is it not by contrast with long-continued indifference, with cruel silence, with unholy self-indulgence? Could we not soon put an end to the charge of sensationalism, by the strength, the constancy, the ardour of our consecration? Sensationalism is a momentary cry—we may silence it by life-long continuance in well-doing.

#### 506. Stumblingblocks.

It is possible to turn God's gifts into a perverted use, possible so to use the Bible as to offend men, possible to set up even a religious institution, and let men trip over it into hell. Your religious institutions will become stumblingblocks, if they are not used religiously; and your Sabbaths will be days of loss to the world, if you do not fill their every hour with the Spirit of Him who is Lord of the Sabbath.

**507. Negative Opposition.**

THERE are difficulties that only seem to rouse our courage ; and there are difficulties we can make nothing of,—without shape, and without name, without address, and yet there they are in the man's way, and they are oftentimes very awkward difficulties indeed. I find, now that we have got to use long fine names for ugly things, that this has come to be the name of the class of difficulty to which I refer, namely *negative opposition*. Do you know the meaning of that? Persons who represent this kind of difficulty, do not fight a man ; they do not say, "We mean to oppose you here, and there, and yonder, and these are the weapons which we intend to use when we come to fight;" but they just sit by and *watch*. You cannot kill a man for *watching* ; you cannot bring him to church discipline for *watching* ; you cannot make him ashamed of himself for *watching*. He is a stumbling-block, a difficulty, a great wedge of ice in the Church, and yet his crime is summed up in *watching*. The enemies of the Saviour "watched Him whether He would heal on the Sabbath-day." Always watched! How few kind human eyes lighted upon Him, beamed encouragement upon Him! There was always a cold criticism in the eyes that looked upon Him, always something cheerless and discouraging! If it had not been for the abundance of His love, and the perfectness of His manhood, He could not have stood so long before such a trial of malignant watching, passive opposition, and active hostility.

**508. The Open Sinner: Self-condemned.**

A MAN who is reeling in the streets under the influence of intoxication. That man does not require the Holy Ghost to convince him of sin. There is no common man on the road-side that would not instantly turn upon him and say, "That is a sinner." No ghost is needed to make such a revelation. Every child, seeing the reeling man coming near, will instantly feel that he is in the presence of a sinner. God is not required to come down to the earth and



say to the drunkard in his drunkenness, "You are a sinner;" to the blasphemer in the madness of his profanity, "You are a sinner;" to the adulterer in his uncleanness, "You are a sinner." All these things are known by the common morality, the non-christian instinct which is in every man, and which teaches him to distinguish—though not always minutely and spiritually—between right and wrong.

#### 509. Children are Preachers.

Yes, all children are preachers; all little children are God's ministers; and people from whom we never expected to hear anything may be channels of communication between our Father and our souls. Set it down as a great lesson, that you may learn something from every man, and often from the unlikeliest of men you may get a word that may solve a mystery, or yield an unexpected blessing.

#### 510. Christianity v. Social Improvements.

CHRISTIANITY includes within its benign purpose all social improvements, all bodily recoveries, all domestic peace, all national progress. To work apart from Christianity is to fail in touching the world's disease. As well may you seek to raise the dead by re-lettering their tombstones, as to give men the highest life by improving, even to the point of decoration, their social circumstances. Paint your cheeks, in order to give yourselves health; dress the putrid bodies of the dead, and set them up at the banquet table, in order to recall the vanished joys of your household; surround the drivelling idiot with the profoundest books and the choicest works of art, in order to show your skill in recovering his fallen mind; do these things, and you will act with infinitely more reason than they act who banish Christ from their counsels, and seek to dispossess the devil by enlarging and refining his habitation in the human heart.

**511. Sorrow.**

A MAN is not righteously angry unless there be sorrow in his indignation; no man can be truly joyful until he touches just the borderland of sorrow in his very rapture.

**512. High Culture.**

THE artist shall go into a building and be troubled by it exceedingly; a thousand laymen shall be there, and be quite comfortable. The artist's eye instantly detects the false proportion, the line that is out of course, and his eye will turn to it; he may put very severe repressive restraints upon himself; he may make many a vow to be blind to the defect; but the trouble will come again and again upon him, because on that side of his life he is highly cultured, so much so as to be almost perfect. And by so much as any man is himself perfect, does he instantly detect what is defective and imperfect in other people.

**513. Obscure Preachers.**

LET us be very careful how we talk about men who are called to speak God's revelations. If he calls an obscure man to do His work, what is obscurity unto the Lord? One ray of His glory, and the obscurity perishes; one elevation of His hand, and no pedestal of ours can reach the immeasurable eminence.

**514. The Cathedral of Praise.**

YONDER is a man sitting alone with closed eyes, yet the vision of his soul is fastened upon a wondrous picture. He is looking at a great poem built in stone, at a piece of wondrous thinking, having great foundations, far-ascending and glittering pinnacles or majestic domes. It is all in his mind. At present it is nothing but a thought. He is an architect. He has a cathedral in his brain, and he sees it, every line—sees the great gaping places dug out for the

foundations, sees the courses of great rough unpolished stone—sees the building rising into shape, into presence, into meaning, into awfulness—petrified poesy. But that is not enough for him. Now he draws his plan. He gives the thought visibility; he interprets it to duller brains; he calls in what may be termed, without offence, a secondary order of intellect—not the dreaming and poetic intellect, that creates new heavens and new earths and lives in continued newness of beauty. He calls in the power that can give expression and visibleness to great ideas, and he is not content until he sees this thought of his built up in all its grandeur and completeness; and even then, if he be a true artist, if the divine fire of art be really in him, he wants something more. He does not content himself with looking at the great stone-work; he wants to see the purpose for which that stone-work was put up carried out, in so far as he himself is a complete man and works upon complete ideas. There is to be an inner cathedral, a human cathedral, a cathedral of praises, a cathedral of living worshippers. Probably he does not in all cases reach that third idea, but that third idea ought to be consequential upon the other two; and *is*, in the up-building of the great cathedral which God Himself is to inhabit—first, His own great speechless, silent, infinite, universe-encompassing love, and then His visible Son, and then His redeemed Church, and then the Cathedral of Praise which the Holy One of Israel is to inhabit throughout eternity.

#### 515. A Poor Theology.

A GOOD many of us draw our joy from things that are *external*. Here is a man whose trade is remarkably good; whose fields are ripe unto the harvest; the sun and he seem to be in conspiracy; he seems but to have to utter a wish, and it is gratified; he is strong in body, never loses a night's rest, gets everything he wants. And he says, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." But that is a poor theology, a poor faith. A man's income is doubled; and he says, "God is very good. I will rejoice in the Lord,

and joy in the God of my salvation." So he ought. But there is a possibility beyond that, and it is to that further, deeper possibility I want to get.

#### 516. Christ's Teaching.

CHRIST said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He said the words "these things" allusively. He did not turn round and look at them; He waved his finger towards them, as men might indicate trifles. "First the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Having secured that gift you secure all blessings along with it. "Take no thought for the morrow." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal." This is Jesus Christ's teaching. He does not take you out into the fields and say, "Whenever you find the fig-tree blossoming; whenever you find abundance of fruit in the vines; whenever the labour of the olive is a great success, and the fields are covered with meat; then gather yourselves and praise God for all the riches of His hand." He says, in effect, "Pay no attention to these things,—no primary attention to them. Your one great business is to know God, to love God, to seek to understand and to do His will; and as for all these things they shall be added unto you,—thrown in as a man might throw in some trifle to a merchantman who had made great purchases of him."

#### 517. Day of Judgment.

THE day of judgment may be the shortest day that ever dawned, may be but a moment, because every man will judge himself, and one look at God's face will mean destiny!

#### 518. Labouring.

YOU know how you have laboured for your position: you counted no toil too severe that you might attain your pre-

sent status. You have even submitted to be snubbed and ignored and slighted. Sometimes you have stooped where you would gladly have stood erect; sometimes you have done things from which your best nature has shrunk; but, you have said, "I want to reach yonder eminence, and I will do it." That is your character. You *can* strive. If you can strive for a bubble, if you can follow a feather, borne away upon the flying winds, why not strive to enter in at the strait gate?

### 519. Joy.

HERE is a man who has a secret,—a man who rises amid the pomp of nature, the productiveness of summer, and says, "Though every light be put out, and every root be withered, I have a joy that cannot be impaired." Men of that kind stimulate us; they excite inquiry—they turn our hearts into a new direction of thought, expectation, and purpose. If we can prove them to be fanatical, and their theology to be absurd, then we may recur to the old prose, the eternal insipidity of a tepid faith, of a diluted hope. It is a very delicate thing, however, to call one of the oldest men in the Church a liar.

### 520. The Wedding Feast.

HERE is a wedding feast,—the guests are all prepared for the banquet and the joy. One man has stolen in who has not the right robe on. Why, it is as if he had crept into an oven, a hot oven! Nobody speaks to him; yet he feels if there was only a way out—down here, or along there, or up yonder—anywhere to get out again! because the whole atmosphere is against him. You know what it is to have an *atmosphere* against you? Not an army of soldiers coming out, so many abreast, with spikes, and guns, and mighty weapons of war. Not that, but the atmosphere, the subtle, impalpable thing that gets round and round you, and burns you! It would be even so if a man could get into the kingdom of heaven by jumping over the wall, in-

stead of going through the strait gate, walking along the narrow way. The ungodly man could not be at home in heaven.

### 521. Faith.

SUPPOSE you talk to a doubting or unbelieving man in the presence of a plant, you might put your case thus: "Look at this plant. How beautiful in form, in colour, how productive, how adapted to the necessities of man! Can you look at this plant and deny the power, the wisdom, the goodness of God?" Suppose the observer to yield the argument thus far: "I cannot look at that plant without feeling that there must be a Creator, a Designer; I cannot look upon the wheat-fields, upon the gardens and meadows of the world, and observe the works of nature, without feeling at least that there must be something more than we see." That is the man's lesson in the alphabet. So long as you keep these things before him, you at all events trouble his infidelity, and you constrain him to make acknowledgments, though they be made with some reluctance. That is elementary. Keep him standing in the midst of the wheat-field, and he will be a deist at least. The Christian comes to him and says, "I have a higher faith than yours. Although there be no fig-tree, no olive, no wheat-field—though summer should forget to come—my faith will not be touched; I will still rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of my salvation." You see the difference between the two men. The man with all these works of nature before him simply cannot, without convicting himself of the direst folly, deny that there must be something more than is seen. He cannot go much further than that. But, you see, his faith is dependent upon figs. Wither the wheat-field, and you wither his faith! He is but a natural theologian. Set fire to the earth, and you set fire to his faith,—you have made an end of him! But the Christian thinker, Christian observer, says, "I don't build my faith upon these things. Although there be no more of this natural beauty, not until God Himself is dispossessed of His

Godhead shall my faith be impaired, shall my joy be diminished ! ”

**522. God's Logic.**

HERE is a man who has, for the last thirty years, been scraping money together. Getting up early, sitting up late,—squeezing, pressing, urging, driving everything that promised to contribute to his possessions. He has had no time for pleasure, no time for what the world calls relaxation. He has been worshipping his god night and day; he sees it in the light; it is the heaven of his dreams. Let him stand forward ! What does God say to him ? “ Thou wicked and slothful servant ! thou knewest, thou oughtest therefore— ” That is God's logic,—sharper than a two-edged sword. He takes the word out of the witness's own mouth. He does not superimpose upon a man a new standard of judgment, or force upon him an arbitrary view of things. He listens to the man's own story ; shapes the man's own words into a weapon, pierces him with that weapon : “ Thou knewest ! thou oughtest *therefore*— ” That is turning a man upon himself, and making him feel the justness of God through the very principles and policy which he himself has adopted and pursued.

**523. The Kingdom of Life.**

WHAT are other kingdoms to the Kingdom of Life ? When you have learned all that books can convey to you, what is your kingdom ? When you have obtained all the money that you can possibly own, what is the kingdom of pecuniary means ? When you have sharpened, quickened, stimulated, and enriched your brain to the highest possible point, what is the kingdom of mere intellectual force and supremacy when compared with the Kingdom of Life in God ?

**524. Christ v. Heathen Philosophers.**

THE heathen philosophers gave directions, Christ gave *life*. Aristotle expounded diametrical conjunction ; Christ said,

"As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Cicero wrote excellent advices on friendship; Christ said, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Plato wrote wise prescriptions for particular diseases; Christ infused his own life into men. The Pythagoreans wrote for favourite circles; Christ sent His Gospel to "all nations." Aristotle quotes from Plato, Plato refers to Homer, and the pages of Cicero abound with quotations and allusions; but Christ quotes immediately from the Father, and by so much speaks the universal language.

### 525. Weak Points.

THERE are many men who are very clever in certain points, but take them out of those points and they are shorn Samsons—any child can trifle with them.

### 526. Faint, yet Pursuing.

WE cannot all be on the mountain-top at the same time. Yonder he is on the far height,—he catches the first sunshine; here are some midway up; yonder are some poor travellers just beginning. What then? The one determining question is this: Is your face towards the rising of the sun? "Faint, yet pursuing." That is the condition which ought to be descriptive of every man whose life is an apparent failure, of every man who has a continual and anxious struggle.

### 527. Instrumentality.

THE straw cannot beat the mountain into flying dust. The hand of man cannot crumble the great gigantic bulwarks behind which error has entrenched itself. You are quite right. But God hath chosen the weak things to throw down the mighty. It is not the straw that does it; it is the hand that wields it. Shakespeare dips his pen into the ink and writes Hamlet. I take up the same pen, dip into the same ink, but I can't write Hamlet. It is not the pen that does it; it is the writer. It is not the little instru-



mentality; it is the God who is able to do, and who has done, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

### 528. Low Church.

No Church can be too low, if we rightly understand that word "low." I am sometimes afraid that the Church is going to die of respectability; I am afraid that the Church is muffling herself up in silks and satins and velvets, and is set down in easy places, and enjoying herself while the devil is doing his work almost without interruption.

If you mean by a Low Church a Church that is down, down into the ditch, and the gutter, and the cellar, that goes down to seek God's likeness where God's image can hardly be seen by reason of the overgrown animalism of human nature; if by the Low Church you mean going after that which is lost until you find it, cheering the lowest man, nourishing and educating the lowest little child; if that is what you mean by being members of a Low Church, I am also of that same Church a member. The Saviour's spirit compels such membership.

### 529. Christ's Sayings.

CHRIST will never be dissociated from Christ's sayings, and in this way He will be with His people unto the end of the world, but in a still deeper way—deeper because the words will receive continually broadening interpretations by the Holy Ghost, and be more urgently and powerfully applied to human experience. The first reading cannot bring out all the meaning of the words. It flows like the oil which the prophet blessed. The few words of Christ have expanded into libraries; the poet has sung them, the painter has painted them, and to-day unnumbered thousands are eating the bread which is distributed by His hand.

### 530. Mystery of Love.

Is there a sense in which love is higher than duty, and diviner than conscience? Love is the absorbing power; love

shuts out a man from his own view; love utterly ignores and despises all selfish considerations; love is the fulfilling of the law. Now, Jesus Christ was constantly under the inspiration of love. It was not His *duty* to die for the world; it was not at the suggestion of His *conscience* that He became obedient unto death; His incarnation, His suffering, His death, must all be explained, not by duty or by conscience, but by the great mystery of infinite love.

### 531. The Secret of Christ's Power.

THIS is the secret of Christ's power over man. He does not come to discuss with them some empty conundrum, some wretched enigma, that challenges only the intellect; He sets Himself down in the heart, and trains that, brings that into the liberty of His blessed captivity, and out of the heart there comes His kingdom, which never can be moved.

### 532. God's Ways Mysterious.

IT would seem as if God took special delight in reversing all our ordinary methods, and training us to wisdom by first convicting us of folly. It is so, for example, in our social life. We should have said this: "God will never take away the head of a house until all the children have been trained, educated, and established in life. God will certainly see that the father of the family remain until his last little child leaves his roof a man, a woman." And yet God says, "No, the head of the family must go first;" and He says this also, "It is expedient for you that your father go;" and the heart cannot say, "It is well." No, that cannot be. But God is always doing that; always turning our ideas upside down, and appointing us blessings where we expected despair. We should have said that God will allow every man to bring his work to something like completion; He will never go and break the little bud off the stem; He will never allow a man to work up his column and not to put the capital on; He will never allow an

author to begin a volume without allowing him also to finish it, to revise it, to attach his signature to it by way of endorsement, and to hand it to society as a complete thing. And yet He is doing exactly the opposite of this.

**533. Eloquence in the Hearer.**

ELOQUENCE is in the hearer; pictures are in the vision. You and I may look at a picture and think nothing of it; an artist may tremble before it and say, "I, too, am a painter." You and I may hear a discourse, and see nothing in it; another man, who has a hearing ear, listens and is transported with delight: to him a tone is a revelation, a look is a vision from God.

**534. Through Christ to God.**

You cannot go immediately to God—the Infinite, Omnipotent, Everlasting Jehovah; we see not Him, but we see Jesus, His Son, and that is enough. Every prayer we send up to heaven must go right through Christ's Bethlehem, and Christ's Calvary, and Christ's Mount of Ascension—right through all Christ's work; and then it will come back again through the same road, a blessing, a song, a triumph.

**535. The Established Church.**

You and I both believe that the Church ought to be established. Your idea of establishment is to secure permanence, stability, influence, high position in society; so is mine. We may, perhaps, differ somewhat in our definitions of an Established Church. You may have notions that I cannot receive, yet so far as the substantial notion of Established Churches is concerned—so far as it involves everything that is vital and enduring and Divine—you and I are perfectly at one. I should not think of establishing the Church by law; I should as soon think of establishing God's *works* as of establishing God's *word*. I should as soon think of establishing the light of the sun,

and appointing legislators to watch over the movements of the stars, as I should think of appointing legislators to look after the purity of God's doctrines and the vitality of God's Word. I believe the Church is established—"On this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"—and in Christ's establishment of the Church I find all the establishment I want.

### 536. Unexpected Blessings.

SOMETIMES you can say in the morning that it will rain to-day. You say that the wind is in this quarter, or in that, and the clouds are gathering, and there are evident signs that we shall have rain to-day; and sometimes we say, Oh, that rain would come! "Oh, that out of this great Arch of Summer a baptism of rain would come!" but there is no sign of any such blessing. And sometimes quite suddenly, baffling all the speculations and calculations of the meteorologist, sometimes out of the very fire of the scorching summer, there has come down upon us an unexpected and gracious rain. So it is in the Divine movement. Sometimes I am enabled to say, We shall have a blessing to-day. Such and such preparation has been made; such and such endeavours have been maintained, and the natural result of this process is blessing, grace, peace, triumph. And then, sometimes, on the other hand, we have said, "There shall be nothing to-day." "The heart is barren, the inner voice is smitten with sudden dumbness, there will be nothing for us to-day but stony silence. It will be a day of fasting and sorrow." And, quite unexpectedly, God has sent His angel with blessings we had never thought of; and when we looked for a dreary day, a day of fasting and gloom, God has opened the windows of heaven for us, and given us blessings that it had never entered into our calculations to foretell.

### 537. Conceit.

THE tongue of conceit is a cruel master. It talks itself into madness. It likes to hear its own patter even at the

expense of the comfort of all whom it frets and chafes into a resentment which cannot be dignified by reason of the contemptibleness of the object which has excited it.

#### 538. Sin.

HAD we only heard of sin as a terrible but distant foe ; had we only read of it in a professed revelation of God ; had some imaginative spirit described it to us in poetic language, the case would have been entirely different ; but we have actually lived in its slavery, we ourselves have been its victims, and, having known it in our own bitter experience, we bear no hesitant testimony about its exceeding sinfulness.

#### 539. Faithfulness.

Is there anything we value amongst ourselves more than faithfulness, honesty, constancy—punctual, critical, scrupulous virtue ? Do we not trust the faithful one ? do we not praise faithfulness above all other virtues when we are talking about relationships which subsist between us and amongst us ? It is faithfulness that God values ; not brilliance, not greatness, not astonishing, dazzling splendour ; but reality, honour, honesty, diligence. Herein it is, that the appeal of the Gospel comes to every man,—to the man of great powers, and the man of the feeblest influence ; to the man of the highest honour, and to the man of the remotest obscurity.

#### 540. Death.

DEATH breaks up the assembly, but he never impairs the fellowship. Death hushes the communications of the lips ; He cannot silence the more eloquent interchanges of the heart. Those whom we truly love are always with us—not always *audible*, but always *present*. You have not lost that child of yours you buried ten years ago. The little creature is still with you. And oh, what talks you have together now ! When you go out alone, the little one seems to know where you are and to come to you ; and your face does so

brighten, and your breast does so heave with unwonted and blessed emotion, as you talk over the days that are gone.

#### 541. A Work for All.

Is there any person who is saying, "I cannot do anything with God's revelation; I have had but a poor education; I have had no social advantages; nobody knows my name; what can I do?" Let me say to the little girl and the little boy, God can make use even of you. The dew-drop is God's, as well as the great sea. He can make use of you; what you have to do is to say to Him, "Lord, just make me what Thou pleasest." That is all He wants; and through your little faculties, your little power, He can send His messages of mercy and His denunciations of judgment; and so the poorest of us can be God's ministers. Do not despise the humblest ministry. God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty.

#### 542. Eternity for a Background.

WE speak of the suddenness of God's movement. Why every movement of his has *eternity* for a background; he does nothing in the moment *for* the moment. Every moment in which he works comes up sobered with the wisdom, bright with the lustre, of eternity. We know somewhat of suddenness in our own way of life. We know, also, how suddenness can be associated with permanence. Here, for example, is a volcano,—looking at it, you say, "It burst out so suddenly! we had no idea whatever of the discharge of fire,—in a moment the great torrent, blazing and devouring, streamed from the mountain!" So it did. But can you tell how long the fire had been preparing for that climacteric point? The effect to you was sudden; the process was long-continued.

#### 543. Family Reconciliation.

A DAY of reconciliation! A family made one. Brethren coming together again after long separation. It is a beautiful

picture. Why should it not be completed, where it needs completion, in our own day amongst ourselves? Ministers sometimes have misunderstandings and say unkind things about one another—and exile one another from love and confidence for years. Is there never to be a day of reconciliation and Christian forgetfulness of wrong, even where positive wrong has been done? Families and households often get awry. The younger brother differs with his eldest brother—sisters fall out. One wants more than belongs to him; another is knocked to the wall because he is weak; and there comes in the heart bitterness and alienation, and often brothers and sisters never have a kind word to say about one another. Is it always to be so? Don't merely make it up, don't patch it up, don't cover it up,—go right down to the base. You will never be made one, until you meet at the Cross and hear Him say, "He that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." It is in Christ's sorrow that we are to forget our woes, in Christ's sacrifice we find the answer to our sin, in Christ's union with the Father that we are to find all true and lasting reconciliation. But who is to begin? That is the wonderful question that is often asked us. Who is to begin? One would imagine that there were some very nice people about who only wanted somebody to tell them who was to begin. They want to be reconciled, only they don't know *who* is to begin. I can tell you. *You* are! That is exactly how it is. But I am the eldest,—yes, and *therefore* ought to begin. But I am the youngest. Then why should the youngest be an obstinate, pig-headed child? Who are you that you should not go and throw yourself down at your brother's feet and say, "I have done you wrong, pardon me!" Who is to begin? You! Which? Both! When? Now! Oh! beware of the morality which says, "I am looking for the opportunity, and if things should so get together—" Sir! death may be upon you before you reason out your wretched casuistry; the injured or the injurer may be in the grave before you get to the end of your long melancholy process of self-laudation and anti-christian logic.

**544. The Gospel for the Universe.**

THERE are some subjects upon which you can talk satisfactorily only to given audiences, elect companies, persons admitted into the place of assembly by ticket. You can on such subjects speak only to a chosen few. But when you speak Christ's Gospel you speak to *man*. Not only to men, but to human nature—not to the solitary individual or the special class.

**545. Prayer Fetterless.**

MEN cannot pray by rule. We do but mock men when we say, You must pray for this and not for that. Such an exhortation may do for man when his heart is not inflamed by the passion of godly desire; it may do for him in his coldest and most indifferent mental states. But when he is in his most vehement and determined moods, he cannot be fettered and limited by such exhortations.

**546. A Life's Biography.**

"SAMUEL judged Israel all the days of his life." Think of being able to account for all the days of a whole human history! Think of being able to write your biography in one sentence! Think of being able to do without parentheses, foot-notes, reservations, apologies, and self-vindications! When some of us attempt to write our lives, there is so much to say that is collateral and modifying in its effect,—so much which is to explain the central line. When we have written our biography, we have seen great blank spaces—we do not know what we did then; we have seen great black patches, and we have known that these indicated service of the devil; we have seen blurred, blotched pages, with erasures and interlineations, and we have said, "This reminds us of the daily and terrible mistakes of our life." So our book becomes an anomalous, contradictory, irreconcilable thing. Here is a man whose lifetime is gathered up in one sentence.



**547. Look about You!**

HERE is a lesson upon attitudes, upon Christian postures. Looking down,—not always; looking up,—not for ever. “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” may be said to every mother who goes to look at the few inches of daisy-covered sod under which her little child lies. “Why stand ye gazing up?” may be said to all the mystics, idealists, and transcendentalists who spend their life in pursuing airy dreams, airy nothings. What, then, is to be our attitude? *Look about you!* Look at the things that make up your day, that constitute your field of sympathy and service and kind concern. Whosoever you look up, know that there is meaning in upward looks, power comes from heaven-directed glances. But we are only to look up that we may be inspired to do the work that lies nearest to our hands.

**548. Qualifications of a Great Leader.**

IN a great leader many elements of qualification are combined. Other men may excel him in detached points, but taken as a whole, he rules not perhaps by one dominant faculty, but by a noble proportion of natural and acquired gifts. The position of a leader is not so easy as it may appear to be to unreflecting observers. Men see the elevation, not the strain and responsibility which that elevation involves. The only sound rule for promotion to influential positions in the Church is, that *wisdom*, wheresoever found, in the rich or the poor, the old or the young, should be recognized and honoured.

**549. Days of Revelation.**

THERE are in human life days of *revelation*, when people get to know the meaning of what they have been looking at notwithstanding the appearances which were before their eyes. We shall see men as we never saw them before. The child will see his old despised mother some day as he never saw her. And you, young man, who have attained

the patriarchal age of nineteen, and who smile at your old father when he quotes some old maxim and wants to read a chapter out of what he calls the Holy Bible, will one day see him as you never saw him. The angel of God that is in him will shine out upon you, and you will see whose counsel you have despised and whose tenderness you have contemned. We only see one another now and then. Sometimes the revelation is quick as a glance, impossible to detain as a flash of lightning. Sometimes the revelation comes in a tone of unusual pathos, and when we hear that tone for the first time we say, "We never knew the man before. Till we heard him express himself in that manner we thought him rough and coarse, wanting in self-control, and delicacy, and pathos; but that one tone! Why, no man could have uttered it but one who has often been closeted with God, and who has drank deeply into Christ's own cup of sorrow."

#### 550. Brain Work.

A MAN may work with his *brain* until his very life be wasted out of him, until he ache and throb and burn with such fever as hardly can be known by persons who never worked but with their physical limbs. The prime minister is a working man; the earnest student is a working man; the sincere, self-expending preacher of the Gospel is a working man; the writer who never wields a heavier weapon than a pen, who writes for us day and night, is a working man. Thought takes the sap out of a man's life,—anxiety withers a man! He works who thinks deeply, who thinks until sleep flees away from him. Many a time the employer of labour is a more hard-working man than the person who receives from him weekly wages. Oftentimes a man with a black coat on is doing more, when he is apparently standing still and doing nothing, than the man who is clothed in fustian and works from one hour to another with the regularity of a hireling. But who can be persuaded that *spiritual* exercise is work, that intellectual activity is labour?

**551. The Great Preacher.**

HE will be the powerful preacher, in the long run, who makes every appearance a great occasion; not he who says, "This occasion is not worthy of me,"—but he who will spend himself on one man, knowing that one soul saved from death is honour enough with which to crown the most industrious and beneficent lifetime.

**552. Honour thy Father.**

A MAN should never forget his father. Twenty years afterwards and more, Joseph's heart yearned after his father with all a child's clinging trustfulness and unsophisticated trembling pathos. A man should always be a boy when his father is at hand.

**553. Very Humiliating.**

THE world can get on without its greatest and best men. This is very humiliating to some persons. Here is, for example, a man who has never been absent from his business for twenty years. You ask him to take a day's holiday, go to a church opening, or to a religious festival. He says: "My dear sir! Why, the very idea! The place would go to rack and ruin if I was away four-and-twenty hours." It comes to pass that God sends a most grievous disease upon the man,—imprisons him in the darkened chamber for six months. When he gets up at the end of six months, he finds the business has gone on pretty much as well as if he had been wearing out his body and soul for it all the time. Very humiliating to go and find things getting on without us! Who are we? The preacher may die, but the truth will be preached still. The minister perishes,—the ministry is immortal. This ought to teach us, therefore, that we are not so important, after all; that our business is to work all the little hour that we have; and to remember that God can do quite as well without us as with us, and that he puts an honour upon us

in asking us to touch the very lowest work in any province of the infinite empire of His truth and light.

**554. The Real v. The Ideal.**

WE cannot always live in the wonderful. It is there that so many persons get wrong. You cannot live upon champagne; you cannot live upon luxuries; you can't live healthily on sensation. You must have something substantial, real, deep, vital,—something that touches the profoundest experience of your life, the inmost consciousness of your spirit, and that follows you through all the engagements of the day. You must have the practical as well as the imaginative; you must have the substantial as well as the poetical. I believe in the airy dream; I believe also in the solid rock. I like to look on the far-flashing cross that surmounts the great pile; but let me remember that yonder cross would never have blazed in the rising or setting sun if there were not somewhere the great strong foundation on which it rested.

**555. The Minister's Sphere.**

A TRUE servant of the Lord Jesus Christ has little or nothing to do, directly, with the little, petty, fussy controversies of the day. It is not his business to walk into heated committee-rooms and to discuss, with all learning and profundity, your shabby parochial politics. The minister of Jesus Christ addresses man as man, and by moving the heart he moves the will; by enlightening the judgment, he elevates the life. Having done that interior, moral, everlasting work, there comes out of him, in all directions, the happiest influence in relation to things that are local and perishing. We shall fall from the great ministry, if, forgetting the universal, we give our strength to the particular.

**556. Religious Impulses.**

I HAVE known a drunken man knock a Roman Catholic down, because the Papist said, "John Wesley is in hell."

Was the drunken man a religious character? No. But he had religious emotions, impulses, sensibilities, and even when he was intoxicated, he would have preferred a hymn to a ribald song.

**557. Stethoscopically discerned.**

Look at this ruddy-faced boy. You can't walk out with this boy forty yards but he challenges you to leap a five-barred gate, or to have a game at throwing stones at something, or leaping over ditches about twelve feet wide; and you, not being so boyish as he is, respectfully decline the challenge, but you say, "What a vigorous lad that is! what power, what spring he has! There will be a long life there and a happy one." A scientific man comes to your house: you talk physiology. The scientific man proposes to examine this ruddy-faced boy, your companion in the field. He applies an instrument to the region of the heart, and suddenly there is a changed expression of countenance on the part of the physician. Turning aside to you he says, "This boy will never see five-and-twenty. Has he had rheumatic fever? There is valvular affection of the heart, and before he is five-and-twenty I am afraid he will be gone." Of course you disbelieve it. You saw the boy in the field vaulting a gate, leaping a ditch, throwing stones many a yard, and you can't disbelieve your eyes—that would be unmanly and unworthy of the independence of manhood. The doctor says, "Apply your ear to this instrument and listen for yourself?" You do so, and hear an irregularity and peculiarity of beat, which you, not being a medical man, cannot understand, and yet you know that there is a discrepancy in the pulsations. The physician says to you, "The untrained, uneducated ear cannot receive this, neither know it, because it is stethoscopically discerned." And you tardily give your confidence to the adviser, and beseech him to lend you his aid under circumstances so unexpected and distressing.

**558. Solitude.**

TRUE life can never be developed among throngs and noises; we must betake ourselves into desert places; in a word we must get away from men and view life from such distance as may be realized by intimate Divine fellowship. As it is necessary to stand back from his work in order that the artist may see how it is shaping itself, so it is often necessary for us who are doing Christ's work to retire into solitary places that we may look at it from the altar of worship or perhaps from the valley of humiliation.

**559. Pure Literature.**

IT is right for you, young men, to enrich yourselves with the spoils of all pure literature; but he who would make a favourite of a bad book, simply because it contained a few beautiful passages, might as well caress the hand of an assassin because of the jewellery which sparkles on its fingers.

**560. Honesty—Holiness.**

WHERE God is reigning in the heart there will be an ever-deepening detestation of sin on its own account; of sin because it is sin, because it is so infinitely hateful to God Himself. Where the spirit of order is in a man, he does not require to go with a square and compasses, and other mathematical instruments, in order to test whether this or that is out of order, or out of proportion: he detects it instantly, by reason of the very spirit that is in him. Where the spirit of honesty is in a man, he does not retire in order to consult an Act of Parliament before he completes his transactions with those who have entered into business relations with him. He does not say, "If the Act will allow me to get off for 11½d., certainly I shall not pay 1s.; he is himself an Act of Parliament; he is the incarnation of the spirit of honesty—he represents the great law of Divine righteousness, and because of the *spirit* of integrity which

is in him, it is utterly impossible for him to go astray from the path of rectitude. And even thus it is with regard to the very highest attainments of the Divine life; when the spirit of *holiness* is in a man, his whole life will be made holy thereby; he will not care to consult rules and codes as determined by human critics; the spirit of holiness that is in him will lead him into truth, into purity, into the very holiness of the all-holy God.

#### 561. The Preliminaries v. The Sermon.

Is there not too much amongst us of the spirit which says, "We shall be in time enough for the sermon, and we do not care about the preliminaries?" The preliminaries! Let the King be dismissed, and let the servant come forth! Let heaven be shut up, and earth open its unclean lips! Let the great Light be quenched, and some artificial jets be substituted! Is it so?

#### 562. Talking Christianity.

SOME clocks don't strike. You must look at them if you would know the time. Some men don't talk their Christianity; you must look at their lives if you would know what the Gospel can do for human nature. A clock need not be incorrect because it strikes; a man need not be inconsistent because he speaks as well as acts.

#### 563. Spiritually Blind.

You have seen an old man tottering with the gathered infirmities of a weary life-time, and wandering in darkness, on which no summer sun could shed the light of morning; blind! blind from his birth! never saw God's outer robe of many colours; never saw God's shadowed outline—his own mother's face! You have seen such a man, led along the thronged highway by a little child, to whose young bright eyes he committed himself in hope and faith. I am that poor blind wanderer through the way of God's mysteries, and that little guide represents the benevolence, the mercy,

the tenderness, with which God leads me from horizon to horizon, until I stand amid the encircling glories of the perfect revelation. The commonest mercy of the day-time flames up into a fire-guide that lights men through the gloom and trouble of the night.

#### 564. *The Spoiled Child.*

It has been said by those people who observe the ways of men, that oftentimes those who have been most carefully brought up can, when occasion requires it, rough it with the best grace, and can do things which excite everybody's wonder. We say, concerning certain boys who have had nothing but confectionery to eat ever since they were born, that have always been kept out of dangerous places, "Depend upon it, when the wind turns into the east, when there is a flood or a fire, when there is some sudden and terrible adversity in their lives, they will be unprepared for such a visitation." And it has turned out that the spoiled child has sometimes been the best man. He has stooped with a grace which has excited the wonder of everybody; he has shown how possible it is, under the covering of decoration and excess of attention, to be cultivating the best strength, and preparing for the wettest day. Some of us, who never had two halfpennies to make a noise with, when we have got into a little prosperity, and then a little adversity has come sharply and suddenly round upon us,—why, we have grunted and complained, and been pettish and snappish, as though we had been nursed in the very lap of heaven and never set our feet on anything coarser than gold. Oh, be men! Do have a life that domineers over circumstances; that takes the bitterest cups, or the exile's solitude, or the slave's lash, and that says, "After all, I am God's child, and I will live for that dear Father."

#### 565. *Sanctified Humanity.*

OUR differences are but so many facets of one diamond, which Christ will regard as the choicest and costliest jewel



in His crown—the diamond of recovered and sanctified humanity.

**566. Religion in Business.**

It is possible that some of you may be secretly wishing that you could spend all your days in public prayer, in the hallowed engagements of the sanctuary, in preaching the Gospel, or in teaching the young ; let me say to you, that there is not an errand-boy in the streets of London who cannot be turning his work into the business of God ; all business may be made our Father's, by doing it in our Father's spirit, and for our Father's glory. Do not yield yourselves to the fallacy that religion is separate and distinct from all the common engagements of life. The door-keeper in the poorest commercial establishment in this city may be doing his Father's business quite as much as the elders and angels that are around the throne. Everything depends upon your spirit. You may make the commonest duty uncommon by coming to it in a sanctified and heavenly spirit.

**567. Charity.**

THERE is a charity that is uncharitable ; there is a charity of which the Apostle never spoke in the beautiful chapter in Corinthians ; there is a charity that is but outward, a base simulation of the Divine, all-encompassing love which comes out of true Christian life. If we have any patience, therefore, with lax morality in the Church ; if we can wink at one another's moral weakness ; if we have one standard of discipline for the rich, and another for the poor ; if we have a poor man's morality, and a rich man's righteousness,—then is our Church a den of thieves, and the Holy Ghost hath abandoned us to the darkness and wickedness of our own devices.

**568. Loving One Another.**

WHEN, as a Christian Church, we cultivate a spirit of mutual trustfulness ; when each esteems other better than

himself; when the strong delight to recover and support the weak; when the wise are patient and gentle towards those of fewer attainments; when we are careful of each other's reputation, and gentle towards one another's infirmities; when we are pitiful, long-suffering, condescending, unsuspicious, and self-sacrificing, then will men remember that it is written, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

#### 569. To-morrow.

THERE is a kind of power which exhausts itself in one great effort, but it is not *living* power; it is mechanical, not dynamical; and, though it be seen in human history, it is a spasm of weakness, not the throb of a healthy heart. Christ told men that the power which had worked one miracle could work another, and that what was given was but a hint of the resources that were untouched. This could not but substantially aid the effect of his teaching respecting that all-exciting and ever-pressing subject—TO-MORROW. To most men "to-morrow" had been a spectre, but Christ showed it might be an angel. When men looked forward to it with fear, Christ inquired, with the slightest tremor of reproach in His tone, "How many baskets full of fragments took ye up?" Christ never held history in contempt. He made yesterday the prophet of to-morrow.

#### 570. God's All-seeing Eye.

ALMIGHTY God Himself comes down to see what the children of men are doing, and when He comes down (a phrase which is used to accommodate Himself to our methods of expression), nothing can escape the penetration of His eye. He looks at our day-books, ledgers, and other memorandum books, to see how we are building the tower of our life; He visits our country residences and palatial buildings for the purpose of trying their foundations; He looks into all the building of our fortune, that He may see whether our gains have been honestly secured.

**571. Above Reason.**

THERE are many things which cannot be read without instruments and mediums. God comes and says to us, "I have something to say to you which you never could hear by your own unaided faculties; but I will give you the faculty, I will give you the capacity to receive, and that capacity to its utmost limits." I say this is not a mystery that is *opposed* to reason, though it may be a mystery which is *above* reason. Instruments will read the works, but instruments cannot read the word. Only God can reveal Himself. What man knoweth the things of man save the spirit of man that is in him? even so—mark the connecting link—the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. It is thus put upon reasonable grounds. As with men so with God. You cannot read the things that are in your brother's mind: no man can read the things that are in your mind, you alone can reveal them.

**572. God Wiser than Man.**

Is there a plague in the city? Purify your sanitary arrangements, cleanse your drains, disinfect your channels, use everything that is at all likely to conduce to a good end,—then I will pray for you unto the Lord. After nature has exhausted herself, there may be something for the Lord to do, may there not? Who are we? Where did we obtain our education? Who put us up just one inch above the infinite that we might be able to say to God, "Now the people have done everything there is nothing for Thee to do." Who are we? A man ought to have a good many certificates, credentials, and testimonials before he is able to establish a status which will justify him in suggesting that when all *natural* processes have been exhausted, *God* cannot do anything. What if God should be just one iota wiser than we are? What if, after we have exhausted the resources of our skill and the efforts of our strength, God might be able to say, "See, there is one more thing to be done." It would not be according very much to God,

would it? Blessed are they who believe that, after they have exhausted themselves, God can do exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think!

### 573. Human Knowledge Limited.

As a mere matter of fact, then, apart from theological inquiries, there are limitations to human knowledge. Man does not even understand himself; on every side he touches immediately the boundary of his information and his power; the atom baffles him; the insect is only half comprehended; the sea sounds like a great mockery; the dwelling-place of the light is yet undiscovered, and as for darkness, no man knoweth its habitation: the wise man knows only his folly; he cannot tell by what way the light is parted which scattereth the east wind upon the earth; he knows not whether the rain had a father, or who hath begotten the drops of dew; he cannot tell out of whose womb came the ice, or who gendered the hoar frost of heaven; Mazzaroth, Arcturus, Pleiades, and Orion pay no heed to his voice; he heareth the sound of the wind, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth!

### 574. Paul at the May Meetings.

WERE the Apostle to visit us, and be shown our elaborate machinery constructed for the evangelization of the world—were he to spend the month of May in London, and add to his many afflictions the burden of hearing all the papers, resolutions, and speeches with which that loquacious month abounds—he would probably take occasion to repeat the doctrine, “The kingdom of God is with power.” I do not think he would care much for our speeches. The one thing for which he would care most is the one thing for which many people care least, namely, the Report of work done and results secured. He would certainly look at the *power* rather than at the rhetoric; and whilst the crowds might be cheering rapturously, his heart might feel the stings of dependency.

**575. Christ and Christians.**

A LIVING man is the most convincing argument on behalf of the Christian religion. We are called not to reformation, but to regeneration—not to morality (popularly so called), but to theology as Jesus Christ interpreted it. If we accept the heavenly call, we shall at last be found—*at the CROSS and in the LIGHT*. It is finished. Christ and Christians are for ever one.

**576. Heaven v. Hell.**

WE know but little of what God means when He says, "Heaven;" that word gives us but a dim hint of the infinite light and blessedness and triumph which are in reserve for the good. We have but a poor conception of what God means when He says, "Hell;" that word is but a flickering spark compared with the infinite distress, the endless ruin and torment, which must befall every man who defies his Maker.

**577. Life.**

A MAN should himself always be greater than his words. However eloquent his speech, his life should be deeper, broader, diviner, than any words can ever reveal.

**578. Patriotism.**

WE are subjects of the same Crown; we have different ways of expressing our patriotism or of developing our concern for the empire; but if an evil hand is laid upon the throne, we instantaneously, universally, through the unquenchable inspiration of love, rise to its defence, to protect it from the indignity which evil men would inflict upon it.

**579. The Courage of Despair.**

YONDER is a wild goat, living on stony hills and desert places. He has wandered a long way from pasture, from

food of any kind. In the madness of his hunger he sees on yonder edge, five hundred fathoms above the level, just one little tuft of grass—the only green thing within a circuit of miles. It is a dangerous place, but then he is in a dangerous condition. He climbs to it,—the rock almost trembles under him. A moment more, and he lies yonder, hundreds of fathoms below, a bleeding mass. But impelled by hunger, he does what only the fierce courage of despair dare do. So it is with that keener hunger of human souls. We do sometimes pray for things that lie away from the line of ordinary devotion; we would not pray for them but for that over-mastering, irresistible, spiritual force that holds us in its mighty hand. If we were in coolness and sobriety of spirit and temper, we should be able to reason about it and to put things together and to draw inferences.

#### 580. Holiness.

HOLINESS is genius. Holiness hath keen, piercing eyes that sees every filament of Divine truth and holy communication to men. When the ministry is holy, when the church is holy, when every man, high priest and door-keeper, is holy, then the world will begin to feel that there is something in it that is not of its own nature.

#### 581. Amiability.

A GREAT many mistakes are made about amiability. A man may be amiable simply through mere want of interest or force; he may be so constituted, that really he does not much care who is who or what is what. He may have a senile grin—call it a smile if you please—for anybody and for all persons alike,—a nice old man who never says a cross word, and never has a frown upon his face. That is not amiability. Here is a man who is naturally unamiable; he looks with a discriminating eye upon man and things; he is very passionate, fiery, self-asserting. Yet, by the grace of God, he is kept back; at times he shakes in the leash; he often seems as if he would break it and be away!

Yet God's hold upon him is such that he speaks gentle words, restrains terms of indignation and wrath, moderates his rising passion. There,—though he cannot look very amiable, though he may have a grim face,—is the amiable man.

#### 582. God.

If any one could be more terrible than God, we should not worship Him. The measure of His love is the measure of His wrath; the height of His mercy is the height of His judgment.

#### 583. The Casting of Lots.

WHERE two courses are open to a man, and he is in doubt as to the election of either of them, why should he not, after due religious preparation, involving as this must do the entire subordination of his personal will to the will of God, risk the decision of the case upon the casting of lots? Is there anything in such a course that is inconsistent with the *simplicity* of the Christian religion? The man, it is presumed, is most deeply anxious to know what God would have him do; his anxiety amounts at times to a keen distress; he is willing to make any personal sacrifice which the Divine will may impose upon him, and how far soever the decision by lot may oppose even the remotest and subtlest inclination of his own choice (admitting that he may have a choice even where there is an apparent equality of inducements), he is prepared to accept it. Under such circumstances the lot may be surely used with advantage.

#### 584. The Testing Questions.

THE testing questions which a man should put to himself are these: Am I right with God? Have I been crucified with Christ? Do I treat this world with the urgent impatience of a pilgrim who seeks a heavenly country? Am I growing in intellectual power? Does my love go out in

lofty desire towards God? Am I pure, gentle, true, courageous in all good? Do bad men hate me, do oppressors fear me, do honest men brighten at my coming, and bless me in the name of the Lord? Whoso can answer these questions in the affirmative has unsearchable riches, though he may not have a place whereon to lay his head. The outward man will perish, but the inward man is assuredly renewed day by day. In going down, he is in reality going up—his march towards the grave is an ascent towards the skies. Be rich in this way, and poverty itself shall be an element in your wealth; perish after this fashion, and you will be able to say and sing with Angelo—

“The more the marble wastes,  
The more the statue grows.”

#### 585. The Devil's Pathway.

OF course the young man says that he intends to go just so far, and to turn round when he thinks his soul in danger. He says he will not allow himself to be the prey of avarice; he will keep the world at arm's length; nay, more, he will stand upon the world in sign of his dominion. Let him beware lest his over-confidence be the occasion of his stumbling. Can a man turn round on the devil's pathway just when he pleases? Is it not the devil's policy to lure the young soul to lengths which admit of no return? Does the devil allow a man to feel his presence until he has laid such a grip upon him as cannot be thrown off?

#### 586. Life Crooked.

LIFE is crooked; we ourselves are crooked; there is nothing in all human experience of which we can certainly say, This is perfectly straight. God Himself often inserts a crook in the lot. The curve is God's, as well as the straight line; and what if, for reasons too deep for us, He should sometimes lead us along a sinuous course; what if He should often entangle our lot, and seek by these very trials, and perplexities, and knotty places, to work in us a



purser simplicity and a tenderer gentleness? Set it down, then, as a fact that we shall have crooked places.

**587. Different Ways of Meeting God.**

I AM not to say that, because you did not hear exactly as I heard, therefore you are wrong and I am right. When you heard God first He came to you along the trembling pathways of the thunder, and your religion is a sublimity. When your neighbour first knew God, he heard Him with much and intense listening,—it was a still small voice that stole in upon the ear of his soul, and his religion has always been a tune in the minor key; he has been, perhaps, somewhat pensive, contemplative, and never quite lost the attitude of his first listening; he seems to be listening still, and to be afraid lest a footfall should break the continuity of the Divine message. When another first met God, He came to him through the process of argument: the man was broken down by sheer force of reasoning, so far as his intellectual positions were concerned; he saw his theories and speculations broken down, blown away, pulverized, and scattered on the flying winds; and his religion has been logical, argumentative, propositional; and whenever he has gone to hear a minister, he has stopped the minister at every sentence to say, "Prove it." So God comes to us in different ways. We are not to judge one another by our own standard, but let every man show by the clearness and simplicity and nobleness of his life, whether or not he has had a communication from God.

**588. True Greatness.**

SOME of us are prepared to testify that we never knew what greatness was, what immeasurableness was, and what majesty was, until through Christ's life we had one peep into the incomprehensible eternity and infinity of God.

**589. Suddenness.**

WE speak of suddenness. If we suppose that the word suddenness describes aught of mere haste on the part of

God, anything of mere extemporaneousness in Divine thought and action, or regard it as confining the deed to the instant, we shall altogether mistake the genius and method of the Divine rule. The *revelation* was sudden. What of the *preparation*? Christianity in all its phases must be a continual excitement, wonder, surprise. Even summer is a continual surprise to men who have seen it seventy times, and who yet have an eye for the beautiful and an ear that can hear the going of God on the living winds. Yet summer comes with regular return from climes of eternal loveliness. Summer is an old friend, yet every June is a stranger.

#### 590. Disowning a Father.

NOTHING but moral considerations should ever separate a father and his child. Not because the father is poor should the child disown him or treat his name lightly; not because he is destitute of learning should a child affect to condemn his parent. But when the father is morally corrupt,—when all the rain, and sunshine, and dew, and living breeze of a child's long-continued patient love have been lost upon him,—then there may come a time of final separation, when the child says, "I have no father."

#### 591. A Religious Constitution.

THERE is a sense in which religious impulse may be but *constitutional*. It is more natural for some people to pray than others. It comes easier to some men to go to church than for others to go. We must not overlook the constitutional condition. I heard a man say the other day that there were two things in the world he could not stand; these two things were, sermons and lectures. I did not condemn the man; it was not worth my while going into a rage with him; I saw by his very make that sermons and lectures could not stand *him*. He would have been a mighty preacher who could have talked to such an auditor.

**592. Self-importance.**

WHEN a man's greatness—whatever it be, political, social, or religious—is all traced to God, out of that one consideration will come wisdom, and nobleness, and pathos. Always depend upon a man who finds in God the redeemer of his soul, the elevator of his circumstances. Religion never made a man haughty; Christianity never made a man unendurable. There have been many great men self-conceited, dangerous to go near, self-important,—always standing upon what they call their dignity; but they did not know what it was to live in God and to live for Christ, and to exert their influence from the elevation of the Cross.

**593. The Large-minded Man.**

THE largest man is the man who knows most about Christ and does His will most perfectly. The Christian ought to be the largest-minded man in the world. Jesus never shuts a man up within a little space and says, "That will do for you." Jesus never contracts a man's intellect; Jesus never looks with contempt upon a man's service. He calls men from the little to the great, from the local to the universal, from the kingdom of Israel to the whole globe.

**594. Christianity the great Linguist.**

STILL it remains a great and solemn truth that he who speaks after the manner of the Holy Ghost speaks all languages. The time will come when men will not have to learn languages as they learn them now; when the mere gift of uttering vocables will be enlarged, and the Church shall have full empire over all methods of communication. But in the mean time Christianity is the universal tongue. The Christian man speaks to every other man in his own tongue. To the refined, he speaks with a refinement never taught in the schools; to the vulgar and the low he speaks with a homeliness, condescension, and point which go right to the lowest, vulgarest man's heart. In this way Christianity asserts its Divinity.

**595. Bad Man's Fate.**

TERRIBLE is a bad man's fate! He cannot elude God. He may have success; but in his very success he will find a sting which will inject poison into his life, and destroy sweet, profound, refreshing rest! He starts on a war, the end of which is known from the beginning; who starts to war against God.

**596. Family Relationship.**

IT is when souls are akin that fatherhood and sonship, brotherhood and sisterhood, are established. It may come to be the same thing with the son. There are fathers who have been compelled to shut the door on their own sons, and did not do so lightly; it was not for the first offence,—it was not until every hope had been disappointed, every godly desire had been repulsed and mortified, and all the volume and passion of human love had been repelled and scorned and blasphemed. Blessed are they who would for ever keep all family relationships, all tender kindreds, fresh, blooming, bright! If they would do so they must live in Christ,—their centre must be fixed upon the eternal love of the One Father. Then they will never outgrow their affections; they will be young for ever, responsive to the voice of love, always sensitive, tender, good.

**597. Money Answereth all Things (?)**

WHAT is the meaning of the expression, "Money answereth all things"? To this I can reply best by throwing out a challenge: write out a list of everything that can be bought for money, and I will write out a list of things that are to be had without money and without price. You can write at the head of your list, "Money answereth all things;" and I will write at the head of mine, "Thy money perish with thee." Write your list; or wait, I will write it for you; it is but a short and easily-remembered tale. On your list I read as follows—houses, fields, bricks,

timber, iron, food, raiment, wine, horses, paint, gilt, stucco—I may now add &c., for there is nothing remains but that is of a piece with what has been recited. Now let me refer to the other list, which bears the heading “Thy money perish with thee:”—Courage, Honour, Truth, Purity, Gentleness, Charity, Peace, Magnanimity, Power of Intellect, Kindness of Heart, Beauty of Behaviour.

**598. Paint for such Men with a Broom !**

HERE are two men looking at the same picture. The one man is chained to the spot: it is to him an enigma, a mystery, a wonder, and a delight; he has never seen such combinations before; he was never before thrilled under such wondrous effects. A man behind him with a thick shilling catalogue says that he does not see very much in that, and hastens on to something that has got superficialities, no matter what the superficialities may be: only let it be extensive enough. Paint for such men with a broom !

**599. God our Vanguard.**

“I WILL go before thee:” the idea of God going before every man as if he were the only man in the world is an idea that does not dwarf God, but rather exalts Him exceedingly. Whose sun is this that is coming burning and smiling in at these windows? *Whose* sun is it? There is not a beggar in the great city who cannot look at it and say, “I have it, as if there were not another being in the world; it is bathing me in glory, brightening me with its spirit of hopefulness, as if I were a king or a leader of nations.” There is not a poor little sick child in any of our hospitals who cannot look out of his window to-day and talk of this great light as though every beam were all his. So God is a universal spirit, encompassing all things, and yet He is mine, as if there were no other creature in the universe. “My Father and your Father, my God and your God,” are Christ’s own words, and it is in His spirit that we come to the highest realization of things that appear to be contradictory and impossible.

**600. Spirituality.**

THE Divine motion has always been towards spirituality; God has never rested content, so to speak, with the material, the outward, the visible.

**601. The Holy Spirit.**

You see that ship there, with the sails clinging as it were to the timbers, just drooping, without any flutter in them at all, and the vessel is not stirring, is not making progress. Wait. The wind is rising, the breeze is coming, the sails are flapped out and filled, and away goes the vessel. She hath received the breath of heaven. Come, O breath of the four winds, and breathe upon us, that we may be getting on over the troubled waters, and hastening to our desired haven! You see these poor drooping flowers, folded up as if hiding themselves from some enemy. Poor chilled little things! They are beautiful, but they dare not show themselves. Wait a moment. There is an arrow of light breaking through the gloom; the sun is coming with his benediction, coming with his invitation, coming with his life, and these little chilled things begin to unfold themselves, and to say to the sun, "Here we are! Thou hast made us thus beautiful!" O Spirit of the living God, baptize us with fire, give us the warmth without which there is no life!

**602. The Way of Transgressors.**

I QUESTION whether there is a man who has had any varied experience in the world—one who has known anything of life in its deepest passages and meanings—who would not say that, even with God's presence, he has found many crooked places, hard cares, anxieties that threatened to corrode and destroy him. I will admit so much that is painful about the Divine life as that. And I question whether there is any man who has served the devil any length of time who would not instantly say that the way

of transgressors was hard—hard, difficult, dangerous, terrible! I question whether there is any man of deep moral experience who will say it was ever easy to take the devil's wages; they burn the hand that takes them, and destroy the heart that would fatten on the evil gain!

#### 603. All Things Symbolical.

THE sun that is making the summer day for us is only a temporary lamp; and the great temples that we build with their noble domes and far-ascending spires, like mighty hearts uplifted in prayer, are only conveniences by the way. And this Holy Book itself is only a school book that we have for the present. And the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are but signs, symbols, set up on the road. The time is coming when there shall be no need of the sun, no need of the moon; when institutionalism shall be lost in spirituality; for the seer said, "I saw no temple therein."

#### 604. Maxims.

WE need something more for our guidance than mere maxims. A maxim is too narrow for life. We need principles which can shrink into maxims and can expand into revelations as the exigencies of life may require. Sometimes we are cold and dull,—then a maxim will do: sometimes our strength rises to full flood,—then we need inspiration.

#### 605. Divine Promises.

"I WILL go before thee." This was a Divine promise made to Cyrus; and God has made the same promise to all who put their trust in Him. It is surely something to have a Father's promise singing in the heart. Many of us know the inspiration even of a human promise; many of us know that we never could have endured this bitter trial, or surmounted that overshadowing difficulty, had we not enjoyed the presence and hopefulness of some friendly

promise in the heart. What we want to feel is the triumphant faith that says definitely to God, "Thou didst promise this, and we will wait for its fulfilment."

**606. Man's Free-agency.**

WE are not forced to have God ; we can deliberately take up our pen, and strike His name out of the page on which we intend to record our life ; or, on the other hand, we can say, " We are of yesterday, and know nothing ; we are so wise as not to be able to tell what will occur to-morrow ; we are so empty and barren as to carry our little earthly immortality in our nostrils. Lord, lead, and we shall follow ; we accept Thy mercy ; we will go where Thou goest." So then religion is no tyranny ; it is no pitiless compulsion of understanding and heart which we resent, but a blessing which first makes us poor, that it may afterwards enrich us with unwasting riches of purity, and strength, and love.

**607. Avoid Danger.**

You say you will leave the place of supposed danger the moment you begin to feel evil effects, but it is too late then ; to feel the power of the world is to know that you have become a helpless bondsman. The young man is only safe as he makes the cultivation of his spiritual nature the one absorbing business of his life. Everything that is merely secular should occupy a very low place in his thoughts. With the kingdom of heaven before him as the goal towards which he is constantly moving, he should hold his head erect, so as not even to see the gilded allurements by which the world seeks to accomplish his destruction.

**608. The Holy Ghost.**

HAVE we received the Holy Ghost ? If not, ours is but an empty profession, and our loudest declarations are echoes,



not voices, and they will come back upon us without bringing any blessing.

**609. No Temple in Heaven.**

WHY should we have the sign when we have the substance? and why the poor, cramped letter, imprisoning the infinite wisdom and infinite tenderness of God, when we shall have Himself, and stand before Him evermore in His temple? for He Himself is the temple, and there needeth no outward building, no outward light—He is temple, and He is light; and when we stand before Him all that is material, visible, and most helpful by the way, will be no longer necessary.

**610. Why Spread the Gospel?**

Do you ask, "Are the Chinese not happy without your Gospel?" I say, Probably they are happy without the Gospel, so far as they understand happiness. "Are the people of India not rich and prosperous without the Gospel?" Probably they are. Why should you go and break up households and separate the father from the son and the mother from the daughter and the daughter-in-law from the mother-in-law? Why should you send fire upon the earth and a sword through the nations of mankind? I tell you, because of what the Holy Ghost has taught us about sin. It is not a question of civilization, of a gilded surface, of a material prosperity, and of a so-called social happiness. If the Holy Ghost has correctly revealed to us the nature of sin, then I must go, I cannot rest until I have taught other people what has been communicated to me of the spiritual, not of a terrible enormity, not of a bloody deed, not of an outspoken blasphemer, but of secret thoughts and unexpressed desires which are foreign to the nature of God.

**611. Blind Minds.**

THERE are blind minds as well as blind eyes. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is perfectly reasonable. If a man contends that

mystery begins with the Bible, he knows not the world he is living in nor the elements by which he is surrounded.

### 612. Christianity *v.* the Dorking Coach.

I TOOK up a newspaper this morning, and I found in small capitals, and in a nice little corner, "British and Foreign Bible Society," and perhaps a paragraph as long as the palm of your hand recording the annual meeting of the Bible Society. I turn over to the leader page, the best type in the production, and find full two columns about "The Dorking Coach." Ay, a Dorking coach against the Bible, certainly! Yet that paper lives upon men who believe in the Bible, who uphold great principles, and suffer disgrace and humiliation for their creed,—yet they are to be snubbed and shelved in that way! I looked into this morning's paper for the report of a great conference which I was unable to attend, and the result of which I was the more anxious to learn, called "The Liberation Society Conference," to which was added a public meeting. I find a report to this effect:—That Mr E. Miall, M.P.,—whoever that may be—addressed the meeting. That is all! Two columns about the Dorking coach, and two columns about the drama, and a column or more about horse-racing. Is it right? The shame be theirs! The Bible Society, the Missionary Society, and Protestant Nonconformity will live and flourish—and so will all other Christian institutions, Episcopalian and Congregational, which are good and wise—when the Dorking coach has fallen to pieces.

### 613. Baptism.

WHAT is it I baptize when the little child is brought to me? Do I baptize something that is only six weeks old? No. I baptize human life; it is the life I baptize, and not the register of birth! I am not here as an insurance agent, but as a Christian minister; and as soon as I can get hold of human life, I baptize it in the great threefold Name that makes all other names names of life.

**614. Man's Impotence.**

WHEREVER there is a man, whatever his colour, language, age, he can understand this challenge, *Can you add one cubit unto your stature?* Why are you not taller? There seems to be room enough above you to admit of growth. Why don't you grow? You would not shut out the light of the sun even if you were half an inch taller! You would not imperil the stars if you did stand half a hair's breadth higher! Why do you not add to your stature? You can scheme, and arrange, and plot, and suggest. Sir! why not add to your stature? You *cannot*. Then consider,—ask yourself a few plain searching questions. See how God rules in all the things—in your height, in the bounds of your habitation, in all the limits which He has set to your life. And let the height of thy stature, the tinted grass, the colour of thy hair, the flight of birds, the time of the rising of the sun and the setting of the same, teach thee the first principles of natural theology. Learn thou that thy little power, expressing itself in ten thousand impotent spasms, is not the measure of God's sovereignty!

**615. Christ our All**

OFFICE and nature, position and life, status and love, will one day have to come to Jesus Christ to make out their petitions and to urge their cases,—for even the lovingest heart, the deepest, grandest, royalest heart, feels that it wants something beyond itself, and that something it can only find in Emmanuel, Son of God.

**616. The Bible a Revealer of the Heart.**

THE Bible exposes the very innermost recesses of human nature; sets a light where no other hand ever placed a candle; lights up the pathways of our most secret life and thought; and we begin to feel that the book we must shut up when we are going to do evil is *God's Book*. This is the great hold, the sovereign mastery, which the Book of God has

over the ages,—that it knows us, that it gives articulation to our dumb reproaches, that it puts into the best words the things which we reap against ourselves and cannot fully explain. Esaias knew us; Jeremiah has analyzed and dissected and anatomized us. If any man would know the human heart, he must read the human heart in God's Book.

### 617. Unlikely Ways.

GOD is always coming down to us through unlikely paths, meeting us unexpectedly, causing bushes to flame and become temples of His presence. We go out for our father's asses; we may return crowned men. There are some people who don't like religion because it is so mysterious, not knowing that their own life is a constantly-progressing mystery. Whenever they would deliver themselves from the presence of mystery they must deliver themselves from their very existence.

### 618. Not Alone.

A GOOD man does not stand alone in his good works. The man who comes to teach truth brings a great multitude with him. Believe this, teachers of the young,—believe this, parents, in your family education,—business men, in your commercial relations,—honourable souls of all kinds:—When you speak a right word, the *prophets* speak through you, the *apostles* prolong the strain, and the *grand old martyrs* seal it with their blood! Thus the tiniest instrument in God's hand becomes a match for walled cities and fortified hosts and men who set themselves against the Lord and against His Anointed. You are poor in number now, meagre in agency; but they that are for you are more than they that are against you. You seem to be alone, but you are not alone. Esaias is looking over your shoulder; Jeremiah is saying, "Be emphatic;" martyrs are crying, "Play the man for truth;" all history says, "Don't fail: this is a crisis; the right word now is a battle won."

Speak it! "Be thou like the heroic Paul; if thou hast a truth to utter, speak it boldly, speak it all!"

#### **619. Immortality of Love.**

LOVE alone is immortal. "God is love." We shall drop argument, logic, controversy, letters, technicalities, pedantries of all sorts, tongues, prophecies, hope, faith itself, and only Love shall live for ever.

#### **620. Charity (?)**

THERE are men who will preach eloquent sermons about the fall of the apostle Peter who will yet, in the most unchristian spirit, expel and anathematize brethren who have been overtaken in a fault. And the worst of it is, they are apt to think that they show their own righteousness by being very vehement against the shortcomings of other people.

#### **621. Christ—a Plain Speaker.**

JESUS CHRIST was pre-eminently a plain speaker. He did not round His sentences for the purpose of smoothing his way. When He had occasion to administer rebuke or to point out the errors of those who were round about Him, He spoke keenly, incisively, with powerful effect upon the mind and conscience of those who heard Him. In His speech you will find many hard words, many sayings which would not be accounted courteous. He called men, blind leaders, fools, vipers, whited sepulchres, and other names equally descriptive of moral deformity. He never appears to have used these names with hesitation or misgiving, but pronounced them as if they were the right names and were rightly distributed to the parties who heard Him speak.

#### **622. Immortality of True Work.**

THE preacher does not build stone cathedrals. But does he not build temples not made with hands? He cannot take you out and say, "See these mighty stone-works that

I have done!" But he may be able, through God's mighty grace, to say, "Look at that man: once he was the terror of his neighbourhood, the torment of his family, and now he is a strong, pure, kind man." Is that nothing? Your stone-works will crumble; time will eat up your pyramids. But this man, this soul, shall be a glorious unfading light when your world, and all the wondrous works upon it, shall be burned up. Be cheered then, preacher of the Gospel, teacher of the young, obscure one who can only work in the family, giving direction to young thought and young feeling, dropping into the open heart seeds of Divine truth! Thou art doing a work which, though it can't be valued by any human figures or by any arithmetic, is prized, and shall be rewarded, by God, who is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and your labour of love.

#### 623. Depression.

You may find depression in all the conditions of life that are healthy. Sometimes the painter cannot paint with his soul; his hand has lost its cunning, because his spirit has lost the key of mystery and has no vision of the invisible. Sometimes the poet cannot sing; he cannot read the parable of nature, nor construe the language of the fretted shadows, nor detain the sweet spirit which baptizes the dreaming soul at the fount of God. To painter and poet the world often becomes dark at noontide; beauty retires and music ceases, when painter and poet would give half their living to retain those twin angels in their heart's confidence.

#### 624. Good Work Spoiled.

Few things can be more humiliating to a high nature, to a Christian philanthropist, than to find that his public work is undone in the very circle within which his own influence ought to have been most intense; that he, who is instrumental in doing so much good abroad, should actually have to come home to find what sin is in its utmost keenness, in its intolerable bitterness.

**625. Christ in the Eleventh Hour.**

IT must be a wretched thing for a man to feel that after all he has to come to Christ. He has lived fifty years without Him, and never had a word with Him, and then just at last, he thought, before taking the fatal plunge, he would like to have a moment's interview with the Son of God. Why not be true to yourself right through, from end to end? And when you stand on the plank point, and the infinite depth is under your feet, why not lift up your dying hand, and with the fragment of a blade, defy the power which, by the indifference of a lifetime, you have held in contempt? That would be sound advice if I looked at one side of the case only; and yet I feel bound to preach this:—It is better for a man bruised, crushed, with one foot in the grave and half his soul in hell, it is better to send for Christ after all, if happily he may be snatched from the burning and may be made into some use in the blessed heaven and kingdom of God.

**626. Depression.**

WHERE you find the highest mountains you find the deepest valleys. In proportion to the range and spirituality of the world in which a man lives will be the pensiveness and gloom of his occasional hours. If the poet droops when his harp does not respond to his touch, how must the soul faint when God hides Himself! If the timid child moans because his chamber light has gone out, with what bitterness of complaint should we speak if the sun were extinguished! If men say they are never depressed, that they are always in high spirits, it is probably because they never were really in high spirits at all—not knowing the difference between the soul's rapture, mental and spiritual ecstasy, and merely animal excitement.

**627. Christianity and Emotion.**

I HEARD not long ago of a minister who sustained a serious loss. Observe, a serious loss. I suppose in a moment of

excitement—yet such a man ought not to know much about uncontrollable excitement, seeing that he reads his sermons—he uttered in the pulpit the word “bully,” and the same evening a serious family took hymn-books and cushions away. It was a serious loss! But there are some men—I don’t know how far they are to be blamed—who never feel a rush of blood to their cheeks, whose hearts never did beat double life, and who are never in the fullest and the highest emotion. It is a mercy that they have common sense enough left to take the cushions away. If that grain of common sense were taken away from them, truly they would be a burden to the Church. Christianity should excite our emotion and make us sometimes talk rapturously, and give us, sometimes at least, moments of inspiration, self-deliverance, and victory.

#### 628. Free Will.

God does not force Himself upon us. He does not say, “I will compel you to follow Me, I am determined to have My own way;” but He says, “I offer thee all this blessing, I extend towards thee this care, I will give thee of My power a sufficiency for thy day.” He talks to us so condescendingly! Absolutely offering His gifts, bringing them down to us and talking about them with persuasiveness and urgent love, showing them to us, and seeking to engage our affections and our energies in the acceptance and realization of His great gifts. So there is no great hardship in our life.

#### 629. Charity.

You don’t sin as I sin. Shall I therefore vehemently condemn you, and seek a character for my own morality by the urgency and impetuosity of my condemnation of your particular sin? I don’t do as you do when you criticize worldliness, but I may speak an unkind word about a brother minister. I will not speak an unkind word about a brother minister, but I may stoop to an ignoble deed in



order to realize my own schemes. I will not stoop to any sneaking, underhand method of doing things; but I may never forgive an enemy, I may pursue him to the death, and half a century after the deed my anger shall burn as on the first day. Is it so with us? You would not go to a theatre, but you are vain as a peacock. I am not vain, but I will do things in secret that I would not like my dearest, truest earthly friend to know. So it is, sirs. We must get to know what *sin* is, not the *accident* of sin! We must not be vehement about the accident when we are comparatively indifferent about the essence. When we feel sin to be what it is, our mouths will be shut; there will never be an hour of unkind judgment in our whole lives; we will all be in the same condemnation. Who art thou that speakest against another man? will be a sore question that will pierce us and cut us in two whenever words censorious and slanderous shall rise to our lips.

#### 630. Free Grace.

ALL men stand upon one level—circumstances are cleared off, that human nature may be seen in its true spiritual condition, and all the arbitrary distinctions of the world are lost in the one appellation of sinners. I know it must be hard for some of you rich men to believe that you cannot do anything towards your own salvation. You revel in riches; your wealth has placed you within a circle where your word is law. Men consult your tastes, and bow to your wishes; but, as sinners before God, you are as helpless as the beggar that groans at your gate; and this, of course, is very humbling to you, it is difficult to understand, and it is hard to believe; yet, I tell you, that this is the unchangeable truth of God!

#### 631. Polariscopically Discerned.

YONDER are two shining surfaces. You look at both of them and pronounce them intensely brilliant. You say, "There must be great fire there, otherwise such a glowing

surface could not have presented itself." A scientific man who overhears you says, "One of those surfaces is not light at all—has not light in itself." And you, a man of independent judgment, a free-thinker and noble-minded inquirer, turn round upon him and tell him, circuitously but yet virtually, that he's a fool: can't you believe your own eyes? what were your eyes given to you for if you could not see such evident realities as this before you? And you treat the scientific man with contempt and disdain. "Now," he says, "just look through this instrument, will you?" and he brings to you the polariscope, teaches you the use of that instrument, and when you have looked according to his directions, you turn to him and beg his pardon for having so rudely contradicted him: you say that you never could have supposed that the thing was as it has really been proved to be; you could not have seen that the one surface was primary light and the other was but reflected light, until you looked at both surfaces through the crystals of the polariscope. And now the scientific man says to you, "The naked eye cannot receive it, neither know it, because it is polariscopically discerned." You thank him as a philosopher, you are obliged to him as a discoverer.

### 632. Ministerial Slavery.

WE know ministers whose life is little better than genteel slavery. They are poor—they have large families dependent upon them—and by so much they cannot afford to resent criticisms and interferences of the vulgarest and coarsest kind. One man will ask how it is that so few additions are made to the church? Another will inquire how it is that the collections have fallen off? A third will profess to lament that the seats were better let in former years. A fifth will intimate that "we must have preaching which is abreast of the times." The minister often listens to these things with a justly angry spirit, oftener still with a heavy or aching heart,—but what can he do? Shall he answer a fool according to his folly? That is exactly what

the fool would like above everything. Shall he restrain himself, and swallow his grief in secret? He does so, but such discipline often brings with it discouragement and sadness,—sometimes almost despair. Under such circumstances no man can work heartily; his very life is diminished; his hope, his inspiration, is withdrawn from him.

### 633. The Victim of the World.

THE victim of the world is entirely without self-control: every speck of dust is to him as a shackle of bondage; he would risk his eternity for a stone or a clod. At all times he would not know this, for in the moments of his release from the urgency of his tormentor he might discover traits of a better disposition; it is when he is brought again into contact with worldly concerns that he shows how utterly he is enslaved and unmanned.

### 634. Frankness.

IF men would boldly say to themselves that they have fully determined to sell their souls to the devil, some social advantage would be the result; other men would then be put upon their guard, little children might be kept out of their way, and society would be able to distribute its confidences with discrimination. It is when men deceive themselves that the power of mischief is augmented; the devil's army is dressed in false clothing, and many who look only on outward signs are lured into danger, and drawn down to death. If you have sold yourselves to the god of this world, do say so; make the fatal transaction publicly known; avoid the very semblance of being religious; do not turn the sanctuary into a mere annex of the warehouse; openly declare that you have elected to be damned for gold. We shall then know what to make of you. We shall distinguish your evil presence from afar, and shall flee from your approach as from a noisome pestilence.

**635. The Bible.**

WHAT has God done in the matter of revelation? God has condescended to have a book written for us;—a tremendous risk, for God to accept the inconvenience of writing and printing his revelation. It might have been purely intellectual, purely spiritual without objectivity, and yet He has condescended to have something written for us. Just as you condescended, when you were a long way from home, to sit up one whole hour to print about six lines in large hand for that little child of yours at home. And you were never so much a man as when you were so much a child. God comes to us knowing the dumbness and blindness of His creatures, and sets everything before us He possibly can set,—to appeal, in the first instance, to our lowest faculties, and then brings us on from that point until sanctuaries are no more wanted, printed Bibles are no more wanted, sun and moon are dismissed from their spheres, institutionalism goes down in spirituality—the Lamb is the light and God is the temple!

**636. Authority of Christ.**

CHRIST does not appeal to men as the heathen philosophers did. They ask opinions, court criticism, and even the wily and garrulous Socrates gives men an opportunity of differing from him; but Christ, with "the authoritative tone and earnestness" of the Son of God, says, "This is absolute; believe it and be saved, or reject it and be damned." He says that he came from the Father, that He speaks the word of the Father, and that He is returning to the Father. So there is nothing between Him and God; immediately behind Him, though invisible, lies infinitude, and He sets Himself up as the medium on which the voice of the infinite is broken into human sounds.

**637. Yesterday.**

WE are not to allow a single hour to be wasted. Man cannot recall his yesterdays. Yesterday is gone for ever;

the gate is shut and the key is in the hand of God, and no man can take it back again.

### 638. The True Profit.

Is there any man who is willing to increase his income a thousand-fold on the condition of being made blind for the remainder of his life? He would have the acres, but not the landscape; he would part with morning, and summer, and beauty; the heavens would be a blank to him, and the earth a gloomy pit. Is any man here prepared to conclude such a bargain? If so, tell me what would he be profited? Or say, What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his *hearing*? Will any of you put down in figures the extent of his advantage? Don't shirk the question; it is practical, it ought not to be difficult. Look at the spectacle: a man has gained all the world, but has lost the voices of his children; no longer can he be charmed by music; no more for ever will he know the power of eloquence; the spring and the summer will pass without his hearing one of their ten thousand messages. Say, then, what is the value of his gain? You who are quick at numbers, let me demand of you an answer! Do assign some value to the advantage of this cunning merchant! Look at him, sitting in stony silence; observe his eyes wandering about, expressive of eager curiosity and mocking bewilderment; stand before him; realize his true position,—all men, all birds, all brooks, all forests, all oceans, dumb to him for ever,—and tell me instantly what the far-sighted merchant has gained? Or, change the ground, and let us put the inquiry thus: What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his *health*? He shall have all that is known under the names of property, convenience, luxury, so far as is possible, but health shall be the price which he shall pay for his vast proprietorship. He shall lie upon his couch; his blood shall weakly pursue its circulation; the grasshopper shall be a burden to him; the summer air shall bring no revival of his decaying powers; the physician shall be of no serv-

ice to him; he shall be the prisoner of pain; he shall have no relish for his daily food, yet all the world is lying at his feet; and surely some of you arithmeticians and reasoners can tell me how much the crafty speculator has gained? I know your reply. I give you credit for sense enough to answer, that the man who would give his *sight* is a fool, that he who would sell his *hearing* for the world would make a madman's bargain, and that to give up *health* for anything that the world can give in return is to commit the crime of suicide, though with the palliation of insanity. What I want to be felt is this: that it is possible to resent the suggestion of such exchanges, and yet to be doing that which is infinitely worse. Think of it. Possible to be saving our sight, and yet to be bartering away our manhood; possible to retain the faculty of hearing, and yet to be deafening ourselves against the voice that appeals to the soul; possible to be preserving our health, and yet to be damning our eternity!

### 639. Plain-speaking.

HERE is an individual with whom, let me suppose, I have certain important relations. He and I have to meet upon some very difficult and delicate business on the Sabbath day,—business affecting the sanctuary and the advancement of Christ's kingdom amongst men. He knows that the business is of a very critical kind; that it will load him, more or less, with responsibility, and call him to the discharge of certain duties which are certainly not pleasing in themselves. The man, by some curious combination of events which I shall not further describe, feels "not very well" on Saturday evening, gets worse towards bed-time, and is unable to come out on the Sunday. But he is at work by nine o'clock on Monday morning, having most mysteriously and providentially revived! He meets me during the week, and says, "I am very sorry I could not be with you on Sunday, but really I felt anything but well." Were I a man I should say to him, "Thou hypocrite! away with thee!" And then what would the man

do? *He would give up his seat!* Men do not like plain-speaking.

**640. "Nil Desperandum!"**

Is there any life that has in it no speck of light? Any day that has not in it one blue spot? What is the moral use and purpose of a glint of light and speck of blue? It is a reminder that there is still light; that the blue morning may come back again; and that God hath not—though the day be dark and cloudy and the wind be bitterly cold—forgotten to be gracious.

**641. Speculation *v.* Revelation.**

AFTER reading the doctrines of Plato, Socrates, or Aristotle, we feel that the specific difference between their words and Christ's is the difference between an Inquiry and a Revelation. We feel as if at any moment they might push a speculation too far, or suddenly turn off at a wrong angle—as if they were groping their way along dim and perilous paths, throwing gossamers over the dark rivers, and tempting men to walk over the unsubstantial bridge; again and again they run the risk of exalting a riddle into a problem, or settling a definition into a law. With this the method of Jesus Christ most strikingly contrasts. There is, account for it as men please, an authority in every tone; his language is clear, and if short it is final; it never betrays the faintest sign of hesitancy on the part of the speaker; if it were an immediate revelation from Heaven, there could not be a sharper outline or a firmer emphasis.

**642. Power of Ideas.**

THERE are men who live by their ideas. Live! No; that was a slip of the tongue. Men who seem to be able to do nothing, and yet society could not get on without them. You see yonder fifty men building a great house, and there is a man standing amongst them with his hands in his

pockets, and that awful thing, a "black coat," on. You say the fifty men are building the house, and a lazy kind of man is standing there with his hands in his pockets, and your notion of political economy is that such men ought to be put down. Well, put them down, and you will have no more building. The men that are standing there, apparently doing nothing, are the inspiration of the whole thing. Men in the world—poor, poor men—who have nothing but ideas! If they were to sell bricks, they would eventually retire into detached villas and croquet lawns.

#### 643. Falsehood.

You never can withdraw your insinuation. You lie against your fellow-creature, and then apologize. You can't apologize for a lie! Your lie will go where your apology can never follow it. And men who heard both the lie and the apology will, with a cowardice that is unpardonable, say, when occasion seems to warrant their doing so, "That they have heard that there was something or other about him, but they can't tell exactly what it was." So mischief goes on from year to year, and a lie is in the mean time more powerful than the truth. It is always easier to do mischief than to do good. Let us, then, be careful about human reputation. The character is the man. It is better to believe all things, hope all things, endure all things, in the interests of Christ's blessed charity, than to be very eager to point out even faults that do exist.

#### 644. Consistency.

THERE are drawing-rooms in this great Metropolis in which Christ has never set His foot, splendid dining saloons in which the Saviour never broke bread. And yet the owners of these sumptuous apartments, when they have a child ill or are broken down themselves, when they darken their windows and lower their lights, probably they will send for the Son of God up their staircases into their bed-chambers, where they can only whisper to Him; and when the soul is



nearly beaten out of them, then they will ask the Son of God to be guest, they will entertain the Saviour with the hospitality of the sick chamber. Men, is this right? Do be consistent, do be thorough from end to end of life! If you will not ask Jesus into the drawing-room and into the dining-room, don't ask him into the bed-chamber! Do be consistent.

**645. "White Lies."**

SOCIETY would be much improved by the infusion of Christian sincerity into its speech. We tell lies, we write lies, and we act lies. The post will not go away to-morrow that will not probably convey a false impression to the most of people who receive our communications. We tell people we are glad to see them, when we are exceedingly sorry. We say we shall be most happy to do so and so, when all the time in our hearts we are regretting that ever we were asked to do anything of the kind. It is at this point that our Christian profession should come upon us with accusing force, reproaching us, and exciting our conscience to the highest point of retribution.

**646. Hypocrisy.**

HERE is an individual who has a most excellent case. He goes to his minister, and he says to him in a whine, which soft men may mistake for earnestness, "I really can't remain here any longer, sir. I have seen so much inconsistency in the members of the Church, I have seen so much that has pained me, I have felt grieved at the inconsistency of professing Christians; therefore, I am going to turn over a new page, and I must withdraw from the Church." He was so pained! What that poor creature carried in the way of other people's immoralities, no arithmetic will ever calculate, no poetry will ever dream! When he has told his tale, and impressed the poor minister, who believes well of everybody in proportion as he does not know human nature, God says to him, "This is the case. That man

would not care one farthing if all the Church were to prove traitorous to-morrow; that man, who has suffered so much pain, who has been so troubled about the inconsistencies of professing Christians, is now planning sin secretly in his soul; if I could show thee by taking off, fold after fold, thou wouldst see in his heart what he has never said to his wife or mother or child or friend; thou wouldst see there a determination to enjoy sin under some disguise. He wants to get clear of moral restraint, of social discipline; he wants to evade public opinion, that he may, in concealment and under such defence as secrecy may set up, enjoy sin as he has never enjoyed it before. Mark him, going away yonder, bearing the inconsistencies and immoralities of other people! He is now going to carry out the very first step of his plan—to enjoy the works of iniquity, sources of forbidden pleasure, as he never partook of them before.” So there are two judgments in the world. Man makes out his own case, God comes with the explanation. Man cheats man with outside appearances; afterwards God holds the light over the case. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do!

**647. Wickedness is Weakness.**

WICKEDNESS is weakness. There is more craven-heartedness among bad men than ever you can find among men who are soundly, livingly good. Is that a hard message to some of you? You know a very bold wicked man. Well, so you do; but that man is a coward. One day the shaking of a feather will cause him to become pale, and to tremble and turn round suspiciously and timidly, as if every leaf in the forest had an indictment against him and all the elements in the universe had conspired to destroy him.

**648. Beautiful Inconsistency.**

A BEAUTIFUL word in the Old Testament is that, and we get it in the New Testament. What? Daily bread. New

every *week*, new every *year*? No. "Give us this day our daily bread." That is it. God shutting us up within a day and training us a moment at a time. The Psalmist said, "Thy mercies have been ever of old." And another singer said, "Thy mercies are new every morning." Is there no contradiction there? Ever of old—every morning! Time is old: every morning is new. Existence comprises a long, long succession of years, but no year ever had an old May given to it, or an old June thrown into it. Thy mercies have been ever of old, and they have been new every morning. Old as duration, new as morning; old as human existence, new as the coming summer. These are all inconsistencies that mark our life. Age and infirmity, the Ancient of days, the Child of Bethlehem; the root out of the dry ground, the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley; the despised and rejected of men, but the desire of all nations.

#### 049. Sorrow—God's Veiled Angel.

HERE is a man whose memory is clearly before me at this moment, who never in the ordinary course of life said one memorable word. I have seen that man in affliction in one room and his dear little girl dying in another room, and he could not go to her; I have seen the dead child brought in to him before it was consigned to the tomb. And out of that man's lips, in that holy, dark, yet brilliant hour, I have heard some of the richest, tenderest, most beautiful things I have ever heard from any speaker. So, in the case of the ruler, in the case of the woman who had the issue of blood, and on other occasions in the New Testament,—we are surprised by the originality of the conception and by the beauty of the expression. Yes, and when the world's account is summed up, we shall find that we owe more to grief than we do to joy, and that sorrow has been the veiled angel of God come to teach us some of the deepest lessons which can ever be learnt by human students.

**650. Crises.**

THERE are crises in life when we cannot speak,—we are stunned, overwhelmed, dismayed. We look almost vacant to observers whose eyes are upon us. They cannot understand our speechlessness; whilst they themselves are under such great excitement, they wonder at our passivity. There is an excitement that is passive; there is a passion that is latent; there is a vehemence of feeling which is often kept under restraint. Men misunderstand us because, in our sorest experiences, we do not exclaim aloud, we do not protest against the injury which is being inflicted upon us: we are led off in silence, and we seem to justify those who injure us by want of protest and argument and vehement denial of the justice which is being accorded to us. Learn that there is a sublimity of silence. There are two ways of enduring the wrongs of life. An exclamatory, effusive, protesting style of endurance; and a silent, calm, dignified endurance of trial, scourge, injury, injustice, wrong. The quiet man has suffering as well as the stormy man; and not always those who protest most loudly feel most keenly the impression which the iron is making on their souls.

**651. Power v. Mercy.**

MAN can't be ruled and governed by mere power, fear, overwhelming, dominating, crushing strength and force. So we find David saying, "Power belongeth unto God; unto thee also, O Lord, belongeth mercy." Power in the hands of mercy, omnipotence impregnated by all the tenderness of pity. "This is the God we adore, our faithful unchangeable friend." That preaching would be untrue, one-sided, misleading, which dwelt entirely upon the regal, majestic aspect of God. That is the true exposition of Divine nature which opens up the fatherliness, motherliness, mercifulness, and compassion of God's great heart.

**652. On Troubles.**

I ALWAYS make a distinction amongst troubles. I do not gather all men's afflictions together into one mass and say, "There! they are all for the best." Nothing of the kind. You must discriminate, separate, classify; you must go into detail, you must say, how did this come, and how did that come? You must interrogate your troubles up to a given point. And only in proportion as they answer satisfactorily are you to deal with them as the seeds and germs and prophecies of God.

**653. Working for Posterity.**

EVERY man who is in vital sympathy with Jesus Christ rejoices in the consciousness that he is working for posterity. Here and there, on life's thronged highway, we have seen little tattered banners set up, bearing this inscription:—"I must take care of myself, and posterity may do as well as it can." This has the semblance of a profoundly wise economy. It is declared to be a fine specimen of the development of individuality. Let fire fall on it! Let the angry earth rend and swallow it up! Let it swiftly fall into the pit! My answer is ready for every man who will stand up and openly declare that his Christianity has never led him to make any humble or sublime "endeavour" on behalf of others. If any man will say, after having bowed his knee at Bethlehem, and studied the mystery of blood in Gethsemane, and interpreted the signification of Calvary's dread work, that his heart is driven in upon itself, without any yearning of affection towards others—even towards the unborn—my answer is at hand: standing before God's altar, feeling upon me mightily the power of a Divine consecration, marking the precious blood which flowed for the world's guilt, a guilt beyond the world's comprehending—standing there, not as an irate priest, but as outraged man, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I excommunicate the wretch!

**654. God in Man.**

THE good man is not alone. Touch him, and you touch God. Help him, and your help is taken as if it were rendered to God Himself. This may give us an idea of the sublime life to which we are called—we live, and move, and have our being in God; we are temples, our life is an expression of Divine influence; in our voice there is an undertone of Divinity.

**655. Controversialists v. Birth of Christ.**

CONTROVERSIALISTS have not quite got over the birth of Christ yet; there are many knotty difficulties lying here which they cannot disentangle, except upon a strictly Christian basis. They must approach these difficulties in a Christian spirit, and solve them to Christian ends, or they cannot solve them at all. Here is the Child unborn. The angel says, "This Child shall be a *son*." There is a difficulty. Think of that! The Child is unborn, yet here is an open declaration that the coming Child shall be a *son*. And whilst the Child is unborn, and whilst He is but a Child, there, at that inceptive point, He is declared to be a *Saviour*. A bold speculation! The Child in the mother's arms declared to be a Saviour! Why, we have known children of godly parents, children of many prayers, turn out to be profane, licentious, devilish, confounding all speculations regarding ancestry and probable results of genealogy and training, as if they had reversed all natural processes and given the lie to all rules—inversions of nature! It was a dangerous thing, therefore, to say, if not an infinitely true thing, that any little child should be a Saviour. Reserve your prophecies until after the event, if you would be wise! When the man is gone, then tell us what he was; but if ye be not prophets of the Lord, speaking from the very centre of the universe, do not foretell anything, because Time is swiftly coming after you, and he will write *Mistake, mistake, lie, falsehood*, upon all

words that were not spoken by inspiration of the Spirit of Truth.

#### 656. Retribution.

WE who believe that the wheel of retribution never pauses, that death does but give us new aspects of life, that there is a higher empire than the flesh, that the absolute and final adjudication is yet to supervene, should carry ourselves with the patience, the calmness, the dignity of men who cannot die! *To-day* is not the measure of our brief eternity; there is a to-morrow coming—coming from the heart of God—coming from the clime of light—coming with justice in its hand and mercy on its lip; and to that better day we must commit our cause. The good can afford to be patient. The true can wait until the battering shower is over. The storm can extinguish man's rushlights, but the orbs of God burn on far beyond the storm's dark wing.

#### 657. God's Love.

IMPROVE what is laid down here, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Improve it! We will not argue whether these words are what is called inspired or not; we will take them merely as words, take them as an idea, take them as if the poorest wretch in all the world had spoken them, and I ask you to improve those words if you can. Love, Divine love, Divine love giving, Divine love giving its only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth—not payeth, not worketh, not putteth out some external strength, but believeth—should not perish, but have everlasting life. I wonder any heart can hear these words without saying instantly, "These words shall lie at the very root of my life; I will live upon them, and I will defy death in their strength." Congregations ought to be converted instantly under the utterance of words so graphic, so sublime, so tender, so far-reaching and all-blessing as these.

**658. Fulfilment of God's Promises.**

Is God all-mighty? Then have no fear about the realization of His promises. Oftentimes it is difficult to see how certain promises are to be realized. We have nothing to do with that whatever. God keeps our hands off His promises quite as surely as He keeps them off His stars, and if He won't let us intermeddle with His planets, and do our little scrubbing and burnishing upon those great lights, He will not ask us to have anything to do with the outworking and realization of His promises. He asks that their fulfilment be left to Him, and afterwards He will challenge our own life as the witness, and answer, and confirmation of all that is gracious and all that is sure in the outworking of His words of promise.

**659. Life to be Spiritual.**

LIFE is to be *spiritual*; not made up of things that can be counted and valued, but of ideas, convictions, impulses, and decisions that are Divine and imperishable.

**660. Show your Tickets.**

SUPPOSE a man had taken out, in reply to the words, "Show your tickets," a beautifully engraved address card—that would not have done. There is not a porter on the line that would not have sneered at that—a very nice thing for making a morning call about six o'clock in the evening with, but not for travelling. Suppose a man in reply to the question, on the demand, "Show your tickets," had taken out a wedding card—that would not have done. "Why," you say, "does life turn upon as little things as these?" Yes, it does. Little things represent life. Little things turn the world. Little things represent great equivalents. It is not the piece of card the porter is satisfied with. It is because behind that there is an equivalent that represents a transaction completed, and therefore it is enough. What right have we to be where we are? Every



man must prove his own right. We may say, "This man has no claim to be here, and that man has no right to be there," but every man has to prove his own standing-ground. You may give a man all the tickets and certificates and testimonials that wealth can possibly furnish, and yet you cannot make a man of him. No man can be made altogether of buttons; no man can justify his right to an influential position in society by pointing to a handful of papers. These papers must represent something more than themselves. Under that, before that, explanatory of them, there must have been great deeds, noble sufferings, heroic services, or beneficent energies.

#### 661. No Excuse.

It is a bad thing to rack our brains for excuses on behalf of the Bible worthies when they fall; if God did not excuse them, we need not stretch our charity into a covering for their sins. A lie was twice a lie in the mouth of a man like Abram. Where there was great grace there should have been great courage. We are not to qualify the disgrace by talking about spots in the sun; we are to call poison poison, and to learn by the failures of other men that our own life will be called to trials which will need higher strength than merely human power.

#### 662. Self-punishment.

In some cases a man punishes himself, in others he is punished by society: you may punish a man for breaking your house, but he *punishes himself* when he puts his hand into the fire: and this he does far more surely to himself than you can do to him: he may break your house, and by dexterity may escape punishment—he may run away, he may defy you to prove his identity, he may cause innocent men to be criminated—but when he puts his hand into the fire, the punishment is instant, personal, and irresistible. It is so with our relations to God; they are so

ordered that the consequences of sin cannot be eluded ; we *punish ourselves*—we actually carry the tormentor within us.”

#### 663. Justice of God.

HEREIN do men greatly err. Talking upon religious questions, they say, “Why does not God come down and forgive us all?” That is precisely what God Himself wants to do. Only even God cannot forgive, until we ourselves want to be forgiven. When we come to Him saying, “Lord, have mercy,” we shall hardly get our prayer uttered, until His great heaven shall become one glorious exhibition of mercy, and shall come down into our hearts and lives with its light and its beauty ! You make a fundamental mistake if you suppose that God has only to say, “I forgive you all,” and thus restore the universe to harmony and order. God cannot say so. If He were to say so, He would be trifling with righteousness, He would be rendering insecure the pillars of His own throne, and the reins of His own government would fall out of His hands. He must be just, He must be righteous.

#### 664. Advice to Little-Faith.

PEOPLE will say, “If that is faith in God we shall have none of it.” True, it is a fool’s logic ; but don’t let the fool have a moment’s victory over you. Don’t let him even *seem* to have a victory over you. If he is living like a beast of prey upon some corrupt limb of your character, go to the Healer, that that limb may be cured, and that no lion of the evil one may fatten himself on the disease of your character.

#### 665. Shortness of Life.

How old do you say you are ? “Old ! why, three-score years and ten.” “No ! three-score years and ten ! Why, there is a *tree* two hundred years old, which has seen generations of your family buried.” “How old ?” “Getting on

for four-score years." "Are you? There is a *star*: look at it; *ten thousand years* ago that star was shining! You are an old man; yes, but a *young being*, an *infantile* being. Very old indeed, if you think of insuring yourself, or buying another estate, or laying out a great sum of money,—very, very old indeed; but if you are talking of the *universe*, you are the insect of a moment—hardly born!

#### 666. Growth in Knowledge.

ISAAC NEWTON had one theory of the universe, and John Hutchinson had another, but they both accepted the fact of the universe, about the detailed constructions and processes of which they differed so vigorously. One man may believe that the earth stands still, another may believe that it performs certain revolutions; but they both believe in the earth itself, they both have confidence in its foundations, and they both draw their sustenance from the same generous bosom. So it must be to a very great extent with the first idea of God. We must receive the idea without discussion, without critical or metaphysical inquiry. We must begin with the idea that *God is*, and day by day grow in our knowledge concerning Him, and in our love towards Him.

#### 667. Anatomy v. Philanthropy.

Is it not perfectly conceivable that a man shall take delight in dissecting the human frame, that he may find out its anatomy and understand its construction; and yet do so without any intention ever to heal the sick, or feed the hungry, or clothe the naked? Some men seem to be born with a desire to anatomize; they like to dissect, to find out the secret of the human frame, to understand its construction and the inter-dependence of its several parts. So far we rejoice in their perseverance and their discoveries. But it is perfectly possible for such men to care for anatomy without caring for philanthropy; to care about anatomy, from a scientific point of view, without any ulterior desire

to benefit any living creature. So it is perfectly conceivable that man shall make the study of God a kind of intellectual hobby, without his heart being stirred by deep religious concern to know God as the Father, Saviour, Sanctifier, Sovereign of the human race.

#### 668. Too Late !

LEST any man should be under the impression that he can call upon God at any time and under any circumstances, I wish to say, loudly, with a trumpet blast, There is a black mark at a certain part of your life ; up to that you may seek God and find Him,—beyond it you may cry, and hear nothing but the echo of your own voice.

#### 669. Judge not by Appearances.

HERE is a fine dashing fellow, who is the charm of every circle into which he enters. A free-handed, genial, sparkling man. Many a ten-pound note he gives away ; many a subscription list he nobly leads. Wherever he is known he is praised as a charitable man. Could you have heard as I have heard him, your feelings would undergo no trifling change. I have heard his words in secret, and seen his face when the true expression of the soul was upon it.

"Why not lessen your expenses?" said a confidential friend. "*Appearances*," he sternly replied, "must be kept up. We must get money somehow. What securities have we in hand? Mortgage them, sell them, do what you like with them,—only get me what money I want."

A knock at the door is followed by the announcement that Lady Grace has herself called for the annual subscription to the County Hospital.

"Certainly," says our charming model ; "twenty guineas with pride and pleasure, my Lady, and deeply indebted for the honour of a call from *such* a collector."

It is over in a moment, over flashingly and joyously, so much so, that Lady Grace thinks it a luxury to meet such a giver ; but the giver himself is in his secret room, with his

secret friend, seeking the solace of wine and cursing the very name of charity. He dare not be less liberal. A diminution of his gifts might awaken suspicion. He must keep the blacking on his boots and the nap on his hat, for if he fail in surface he will fail altogether. He is made up of surface. A pin point could scratch it off. So let him beware, for a touch may topple him over into his own place.

"Yes," says a cynic, "these are exactly my sentiments. I have often had my own suspicion about these givers." Wait! Nothing can be more unjust than such an inference. Without great givers the charity of the world would soon come to an end. It often requires the greatest moral courage to set an example in this matter of giving liberally. Many a man who takes a conspicuous position upon subscription lists would gladly retire into the shade, but that he keenly feels his obligation openly to testify to the goodness which he has received at the Lord's hand. Do not suppose that a man is giving sincerely, merely because he gives sparingly; nor suspect a man of giving boastfully, because of his munificence. I thank God for great givers. We must not condemn the good with the bad. Each case must stand upon its own merits, and herein is the joy that comes of the assurance that "The Lord looketh on the heart."

### 670. Our Dependence.

WE stand to God in the relation of *dependents*. That is our actual position in life. "What hast thou, that thou hast not received?" Let a man begin his studies there, and he will become correspondingly reverent. Have you genius? *Who lighted the lamp?* Have you health? *Who gave you your constitution?* Do you find the earth productive? "Yes." *Who made it productive?* "I did. I till it; I supply all the elements of nourishment needful; I did." *Did you?* Can you make it rain? Can you make the sun shine? Come, I will set you a little task, mighty man, potentate! This: *Change the quarter of the wind!* Now, come, that is a very little thing for a great man like you.

"Well," you say, "that is the sort of thing that I really cannot do." Then, *clear a fog off the hill*. You can do *that*. Look what a port you have, and what infinite impudence. Come, *clear a fog*! Where would your tilling, and your manuring, and your subsoiling, and your harrowing and rolling all be, and what would they come to, if God were to say to the wind, "Never leave the east;" if God were to say to the clouds, "Stand still;" if God were to say to the sun, "Don't show thyself for a year"? All these things show us that we are, notwithstanding our resources, which are undoubtedly numerous and great, *dependents*.

#### 671. Religion v. Reason.

WITHOUT reason there could be no religion; and without religion, reason would perish within the prison of the visible and the temporary. Religion is Reason on her knees; faith, is Reason on her wings; Christianity is Reason on the Cross, on her way to the crown!

#### 672. The Chief Mystery.

THE chief of mysteries, the culmination of all mysteries indeed, is the existence of God. We don't attempt to prove that existence,—the day has gone by for any serious attempts to prove, by mere argument, the existence of God. Mortals are unequal to it; they have no capacity for doing it. It is not to be done by human ingenuity and human argument. We have come to this conclusion, that the *fool* alone can say in his heart, "There is no God."

#### 673. Desire.

How then does it stand with us in the matter of desire? Is our desire after God living, loving, intense, complete? Why, that desire itself is prayer; and the very experience of that longing brings heaven into the soul!

#### 674. All-conquering Time.

THERE is in our members a law of decay. The outward man perisheth. Do what we may Time will conquer!

None can stand before that silent Victor. He corrodes the storied brass: he moulders away the consecrated marble: he drinks the juice of the great tree: he digs graves for giants, and causes the haughty to show their weakness to hirelings. We dye our hair, and paint our flesh; we pay Art with a lavish hand to repair the waste of Nature; we practise deceit in dress, and mimic well the airs of vanished youthfulness; yet Time goes on conquering to conquer, until we confess in death what we were loth to own in life.

#### 675. *Beatitudes.*

THE Beatitudes constitute a complete delineation of Jesus Christ Himself: He was poor in spirit; He mourned; He was meek, merciful, pure in heart, and peaceful; His meat and His drink were to do His Father's will; and He was pre-eminent among those who were persecuted for righteousness' sake. His power was thus derived from His own enjoyment of blessing, so that He could, in the deepest sense, say, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." The blessed man Himself told how other men might be blessed. He preached not a sermon that He had learned, but a sermon that He had lived. What would be the effect if society were composed of such men as are described in the Beatitudes. This is Christ's aim, and its loftiness warrants His followers in claiming for Jesus Christ's doctrine the most practical moral design.

#### 676. *Preparing for Emergency.*

WE are to build for exceptional circumstances. Granted that the average temperature of the year is mild, that for most of the twelve months the wind is low and the rains are gentle; yet we build our houses not for such averages, but for the possibility of severe elemental trials. The ship-builder builds his vessels not for smooth waters and quiet days only, but for the roughest billows and the fiercest winds. Our neighbour may call to-morrow—see, then,

that the battlement be ready! Though his visits be uncertain, yet that very uncertainty constitutes a demand for a permanent arrangement on our part; as the uncertainty is permanent, so also must be our means of meeting it. Be prepared for crises, and expect the unexpected, and be sure of the uncertain; he who is so defended, for his neighbour's sake, will be found to be equal to the severest emergencies of life.

#### 677. Gentleness of God.]

GOD, addressing Himself to human weakness, is the complement of God wasting mountains and hills; God, shedding the morning dew on awaking flowers, is the complement of God affrighting the earth with tempests and vexing the sea with storms. There is an unsearchable depth of pathos in the doctrine that God is gentle to human weakness, and that He will make up with His own hands what is wanting in human faculty. Strong men seldom care for the weak, the blind are put on one side, the incapable are dismissed with impatience; but here is God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, taking the blind man's hand and leading him like a child specially beloved!

#### 678. A Well-favoured Countenance.

SOME men's god is a *well-favoured countenance*. They trust to their shape, figure, bearing, expression. They say, "My countenance is an introduction, a certificate, a guarantee. Wherever I go a space is cleared for me." There are men who trust to outward figure and expression of countenance; who believe that one look of the eyes means conquest. And many a man who does not make a good show in the flesh, but who has an honest and true heart, who is gold all through and through his soul, is sneered at by this man of a well-favoured person, of ruddy countenance, of face that is a key to confidence and a passport to admiration! A very superficial god, by the



way! I can imagine such persons brought into circumstances which will try their god severely.

### 679. Spirit v. Circumstance.

THERE is no merit in poverty. There is no wickedness in wealth. The one question relates to the *spirit*, not to the *circumstances*.

### 680. Self-consciousness.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS is the ruin of all vocations. Let a man look into himself, and measure his work by himself, and the movement of his life will be downward and exhaustive. Let him look away from himself to the inspirer of his life, and the Divine reward of his labours, and he will not so much as see the difficulties which may stand ever so thickly in his way.

### 681. A Pious Ancestry.

YOUR father was a holy man,—will you undertake to *break the line of a holy succession*? Ought not the fame of his holiness to awaken your own religious concern? Are you prepared to make yourself the turning-point in the line of a pious ancestry? Beware lest you say in effect, "For generations my fathers have trusted in God and looked to Him for the light of their lives, but now I deliberately disown their worship and turn away from the God they loved." This you can say if you be so minded! God does not force Himself upon you. You may start a pagan posterity if you please.

### 682. Christ's Morality.

CHRIST'S morality was the active side of his theology;—not something added to it, or made to be collateral with it, but essentially part of it, so essentially as to have no existence without it. This position is amply sustained by the Sermon on the Mount. One expression in that sermon

seems to govern the whole doctrine; the expression occurs again and again, with so much gravity that the hearers must have felt themselves in immediate contact with the Divine mind: the words are—"Father which is in heaven."

**683. Memories of the Past.**

THE way to enrich life is to keep a retentive memory in the heart. Look over a period of twenty years, and see the all-covering and ever-shining mercy of God! How many special providences have you observed? How many narrow escapes have you experienced? How many difficulties have you surmounted? How often have you found a pool in unexpected places? We should lay up some memory of the Divine triumphs which have gladdened our lives, and fall back upon it for inspiration and courage in the dark and cloudy day. Go into your yesterdays to find God! Search for Him in the paths along which you have come, and if you dare, under the teaching of your own memories, deny His goodness, then betake yourselves to the infamous luxury of distrust and reproach.

**684. Inspiration of Love.**

Few women ever go to Christ through the medium of mere doctrine. They live beyond the cold propositional region. The dew finds its way up to the sun without knowing anything of the laws of motion or the mysteries of light, and womanly hearts go up to Christ often knowing little of objective theology, yet wise because inspired and guided by the love which is the elect interpreter of God.

**685. An Inspiring Thought.**

WE do not work alone. Down through the roaring and pitiless tempest comes this word of strength, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Into the dark cave into which despair has sometimes driven us comes the same word of power. If we falter for one mo-

ment, it is that we may spring forward with increased energy the next. We are not to see the results of all that we do. It is enough that no true word can return void to the speaker. Utter the Lord's cry to the sons of men; put in the roots; scatter the seed; do all things written in the Divine law of human life; and one day the eternal summer shall set in, and all memories shall be absorbed in the one recollection, that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man.

#### 686. Disinterestedness of Love.

ALL love is ready for the thorns, and prepared for the slaughter; only by so much as it is so ready is it worthy of the name of love. It may not be driven so far along the line as these things lie, but these things do lie in the line of pure, self-obvious affection.

#### 687. Regeneration not Reformation.

IN God's judgment there are no fine shades of moral distinction; the human heart has fallen from the purity in which He created it, and man now lies in the brokenness and putrescence of mortal apostasy. The doctrine taught by the inspired writings, and confirmed by universal experience, is, distinctly, that sin cannot be thrown off by the sinner at all, and that life can be reconstructed only after seeing God face to face, as it were, and wrestling mightily with His great power and love.

#### 688. The Heart under the Light of the Holy Ghost.

HERE is a man who is respectable—a man of excellent standing, a man against whom nobody can utter a single reproach justly, a man equally honourable and upright and straightforward with the man whom we have just delineated. The Holy Ghost comes into him and shows in him a secret, subtle, unexpressed selfishness, in ways that the world cannot take note of. Remote acts of selfishness? Nay, not acts; when it comes to acts then anybody can sit in judgment upon them. But thoughts of selfishness,—little,

tormenting, urging, importuning dreams of selfishness,—something between a thought and a thing, trembling, hovering in that border-land,—sometimes almost personifying itself, then shrinking back again into impalpability! The Holy Ghost shows him what he would be under certain circumstances, if certain fears could be taken away, if certain possibilities could be set aside,—all that unspeakable atmospheric spiritual pressure which never can be defined and only can be felt. And when he sees the thing in its reality, as illuminated and expanded by God the Holy Ghost, all his cry is, “God be merciful to me a sinner! Nobody thinks me a sinner. I can walk up the main aisle of the church to-morrow and there would be subdued applause at my presence. Many a man would speak well of me if called to testify in open court concerning my standing. But oh! Thou God the Holy Ghost—Thou piercing, cleaving Spirit—Thou hast shown in me one hidden vein that I never knew of, and I see it in the blaze of Thy fire! God be merciful to me a sinner!”

#### 689. Woman's Affinity for Religion.

It is remarkable that Christ is never said to have called a woman to follow Him as He called the disciples; and quite as remarkable that, so far as the evidence goes, no woman ever spoke a word against Him, while many women were last at the cross, and earliest at the sepulchre. It seems as though He had assumed that the womanly side of human nature would not require any calling; that the heart of woman would instinctively welcome Him as the solution of all difficulties, the sum of all charms, the sovereign of frail and needy creatures who have immense capacity of suffering, but little satisfaction in the results of mere logic.

#### 690. Progress.

THOUGH the wheels move slowly, yet will they reach the goal! You are not the men you were twenty years ago! The most of the desert-road is now *behind* some of you.

Your future on earth is narrowing itself to a point ! How is it with your souls ? Your *feet* are sore with the long journey ; are your *wings* ready for flight into the kingdom of the crystal river and the unsetting sun ?

#### 691. Joy in Heaven.

THERE is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, *more* than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. Who can measure that "*more*" ? Sin is thus made to have its compensations. The twice-born man shall be a double joy in his Father's house. Sin shall not be all *loss*. Even for sin's sake, heaven shall be filled with a sweeter and gladder hallelujah.

#### 692. Prayer.

UNDERSTAND what prayer is ; prayer is the utterance of agony. There is a flippant way of praying, which means nothing, which God never hears. We cannot always pray at the point of agony. There are indeed some whole days upon which I cannot pray at all. I can say my prayers, I can put myself into a certain reverent attitude ; but all power of prayer has gone away from me ; and then upon other days I could pray from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and have conscious influence with God. Hast thou ever such a moment ? make a lifetime of it. Hast thou ever an hour in thy poor, blank, barren life when thou seemest to have influence in heaven ? Employ every golden moment of that hour, and in the strength of God's answer thou shalt go many days.

#### 693. Self-denial.

You say, "I do love my father very much." Well now, your father says, "Take this letter to the post for me, before eight o'clock." "Before eight ! I would do it *after* eight with pleasure." Yes, after you had done your own little business, and arranged your own little affairs ; then, when you had nothing on hand, you would do it with great

pleasure! Love is not in that scheme one bit. *He* loves his father who says, "I should like to have done this first, but father has asked me to go to the post before eight o'clock. You stand there till I come back again." That is love. Not the boy that says, "Now, father, I have got this to do; I want to do it very much, but I love you such a very great deal, father, I shall do what I want to do, but I will go to the post for you;" under the impression that his father would say, "Dear fellow, here's a shilling for you." There is not one little scrap of love in that. It is in the self-denial, in putting down that little tyrant that is in the heart, and saying, "Get down, you sha'n't speak—down!" and never saying a word to anybody about what a fight you have had in your heart,—*then* you love your father; and that love only is worth having that has cost us something. Jesus says, "If any man love Me, let him take up his *cross* daily, and follow Me."

#### 694. Christianity Aggressive.

THE Gospel is nothing if not aggressive. It must challenge attention; it must lift up its voice amid all competitors. It does not wait for battle—it begins it. Wherever there is darkness, its glory is poured on the gloomy scene; wherever there is ignorance, it sheds the light of knowledge. A Church shut up within its own four walls, singing its own psalm, and enjoying its own edification, is not a Church of Christ: it is a slander, it is a travesty, it is an offence to the Spirit of the Cross.

#### 695. Christ in the Vessel.

NEVER go upon any enterprise without having Jesus Christ with you in the vessel. He adds nothing to the weight; He is no encumbrance when difficulties increase. If you get away without Him how can He join you? Some poor heart may be saying, "I have started, I am already a long way, many a mile on the sea. Jesus was on the shore when I left, and He said, 'Shall I go with thee?' and I

said, 'No.' He said, 'Shall I not go with thee, O voyager?' and I smote Him on the face and said, 'No.' And now here I am, miles and miles away; and I know I shall be lost." Do you say so? Do you truly say so with your heart, with the heart's lips? "Yes." Then I have an answer for you; but do not provoke the answer if you do not ask the question with a sincere and penitent heart, do not ask for the reply unless you are prepared to receive it. I do not want to give great answers to shallow inquiries. What is the answer? This: Jesus walked on the sea, and so He can come to you on the top of the great billow, in the trough of the stormy deep. He can walk over the foaming water, and He can join your vessel even now. Will you bid Him?

#### 696. No Surrender!

THE tempter tells you to give up the idea of *the future* as it is viewed from a Christian stand-point. Well, *what then?* We are not unwilling to listen to you; but you must make your case good before we can commit ourselves to it. What do you advise? You advise us to give up our idea of the future as it is viewed from a Christian stand-point. We must put this common-sense question in return, *What then?* If a man asked you to throw away a telescope, would you not inquire what you were to have in its place? Here is a father, whose only son has gone to sea, and the poor old man is watching the receding vessel through a badly-constructed glass. A passer-by mockingly says, "Throw away that paltry thing." Will the loving watcher throw it into the water because the mocker ridiculed the instrument? Even though the glass was known to be poor, yet in so far as it helped the naked eye, it was sure to be kept until a better glass was offered in its place. Will you act so with a telescope, and yet fling away the faith-glass through which you read the solemn and wondrous future!

**697. Answering our own Prayers.**

SOME prayers we are to answer ourselves. I once heard a rich man pray that we might be liberal. The moment he had done, I, as chairman of the meeting, said, "Now you must answer your own prayer, and put down £500 at once." If I pray, "Lord, may I be liberal," what do I expect? If I am able to pray that prayer, I am able to put my hand into my pocket and give what I have: otherwise my prayer is impious irony, fervent profanity; it is not prayer, it is a roundabout way of saying, "I know my duty," and a cheap way of escaping it.

**698. The Ritualized Christ.**

IT would be very beautiful if any man should make a waxen image of the Saviour, giving His every feature and nearly reaching the expression of the countenance, more marred and worn than any other man: it would be beautiful to set it in the midst of the church and to drape it with purple and fine linen. It would be affecting for a while to our tender sensibilities to go and look at that effigy, but it would be of no use to us beyond a momentary appeal to our senses, an appeal, the effect of which would gradually wear off till we could look upon the waxen form without a flutter of the heart. My friend, it is not the name of Christ that will save us, it is not the ritualized Christ that will redeem us; it is the plain, living, fraternal, Divine God-Christ that will touch our life's sins, and our life's poverty, and our life's madness, and bring us to pardon, and fulness of blessing, and the reason which is faith, and the faith which is reason.

**699. Inefficiency Intolerable.**

IT is commonly supposed that an inferior class of agents will do for evangelistic work. This is a mischievous error. The best man would not be out of place in the poorest district as a missionary. There is no room anywhere for



inefficiency. The unfurnished workman is out of place everywhere. The pioneer should be a burning and a shining light. The herald should be a man of distinctive character.

#### 700. The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart.

THE hardening of Pharaoh's heart, as involving the development of a merely political scheme, may amount in effect to no more than this,—“I will delay the process, this request shall not be granted at once; and I prolong the process in order that I may bring out lessons for Pharaoh himself, for the children of Israel, and for mankind at large: were Pharaoh to let the children of Israel escape from him at once, the result would be mischievous to themselves; therefore in mercy, not in anger, I will harden Pharaoh's heart.” This is eminently reasonable, and has been found to be so in our own experience. When men have snapped at their blessings, and instantly secured all their purposes, they have undervalued the advantages which have been thus realized. There is a hardening that is really merciful. God cursed the ground for man's sake;—instead of the word cursed, insert the word hardened, and you will see what is meant by a hardening process taking place at the suggestion of a merciful disposition. God hardened the ground for man's sake: God hardened Pharaoh's heart for the sake of all the parties involved: by delaying the result, He urged and exemplified lessons which could not have been successfully inculcated in any other way.

#### 701. Jesus Knows.

I HAVE heard of a great musical composer who was conducting a rehearsal by four thousand performers; all manner of instruments were being played, all parts of music were being sung. In one of the grand choruses which shivered through the vast building like a wind from heaven, the keen-cared conductor suddenly threw up his *baton* and

exclaimed, "Flageolet!" In an instant the performance ceased. One of the flageolet players had stopped; something was wanting to the completeness of the performance, and the conductor would not go on. It shall be so in the Church. Jesus Christ is conducting His own music. There is indeed a vast volume of resounding harmony rolling upwards towards the anthems which fill the heavens; yet if one voice is missing He knows it; if the voice of a little child has ceased He notes the omission; He cannot be satisfied with the mightiest billow which breaks in thunder round His throne, so long as the tiniest wavelet falls elsewhere. *Flageolet*, where is thy tribute? Pealing *trumpet*, He awaits thy blast; sweet *cymbals*, He desires to hear your silvery chime; mighty *organ*, unite thy many voices in deepening the thunder of the Saviour's praise! And if there be one poor sinner who thinks his coarse tones would be out of harmony with such music, let him know that Jesus Christ refines every tribute that is offered in love, and harmonizes the discords of our broken life in the music of His own perfections.

## 702. Results of Men having their own Way.

A MAN sets his mind on standing on some high place; he points to a pillar, and says that if he could ascend to its summit he would see from that lofty elevation glimpses of heaven, and he determines that he will stand upon that summit, whatever hazards he may incur. At length God grants him his request, and when the man has ascended to the eminence which he coveted, what does he find? Sand, sand, sand! Mile on mile of sand—sand for mile on mile! And now he wishes to descend; but how to get down is his great difficulty. There may be no way down but that which involves suicide. Yet the man was determined to reach that elevation; nothing could stand between him and his wish; he urged God to grant him his request; with importunate desire he besought that he might have his own way; and there is no punishment heavier than that

which falls upon any man when God allows him to take his own course.

**703. Waiting.**

LEARN to wait. The trial of patience is itself a blessing. To us, promptitude appears to be essential to satisfaction, but we know nothing of the true meaning of the word promptitude; we measure duration by our own standards of time, not by the solemnity and compass of eternity!

**704. Stopping Short of the Goal.**

I HAVE seen men pursuing railway journeys who have mistaken the station, and got out before they had reached their journey's end. They have been going from north to south, and have got out two-thirds of the way, and the train has gone on without them. It is possible, brethren, for a man to live forty years of a Christian life, and then to get out at some way-side station, and to be left there, and never to reach the metropolis of the universe.

"Where is he?"

"He was left behind."

"Why, he said he was coming!"

"So he did, but he got out at a little station on the road, and we have not seen him since."

"Well, but he took his ticket; he took his seat; he knew where he was going."

"Quite true; but, somehow or other, he got out, and is not here. That is the sad fact."

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Men do get out at the wrong place—men do get out, and don't get in again! What if some of us should live to advanced years in the Christian course, and should then get out, and never be able to recover our forfeited position! We must never get out in any permanent sense until we have reached the great City, whose streets are gold, and whose walls are jasper; and, once there, we shall go out no more for ever.

**705. Sun of Righteousness.**

You have seen flowers which have been closed during the night, opening to the morning sun ; so it is with human hearts shut up in the cold dark night of selfishness, when the Sun of Righteousness arises upon them with healing in His wings.

**706. The Eloquence of Character.**

THE peculiarity of moral teaching in requiring *personal* illustration. Men cannot understand merely theoretic morals ; they must have them personified ; they must have them taught by incarnation ; they must be illustrated in daily life. The artist may teach you to paint a beautiful picture ; yet he may have no regard for moral truth. His non-regard for moral truth may not interfere, so far as you can see, with his ability and earnestness as a mere artist. You may go to learn a trade, and your chief in the business may be able to teach it to you completely and to give you a position in the commercial world, useful, influential, and profitable ; yet that man may tell lies every hour of his life, may break all the commandments of God, and in doing so he may not affect his ability to teach your trade, or artifice, or profession. It is not so in the Church of God. A man's character is his eloquence ; a man's spiritual reality is the argument that wins in the long run ; the soul afire with God's love ; the life that brings out in their beautiful and impressive relief God's exhortations,—these are the things that are most logical, most poetical, most pathetic, most persuasive.

**707. Witnessing for Christ.**

THERE is one feature in our public Christian life which I should like to see more fully brought out ; I mean *the bearing of individual testimony on behalf of Jesus Christ*. By no means seek to supplant what is known as the regular ministry, but supplement it ; and at all costs destroy

the impression that nobody has a good word to say for Christianity except its paid teachers. Such an impression is, of course, at all times utterly and most cruelly false; yet there is a possibility of so enlarging and strengthening our testimony as to secure the happiest results. Why should not the banker, the great merchant, and the eminent lawyer say publicly what God has done for their souls? If the Prime Minister of England, if the Lord Chancellor, if the judge upon the bench, if the well-known senators, would openly testify on behalf of Jesus Christ, they might produce the deepest possible impression for good. Such a testimony would destroy the slanderous and blasphemous notion that Christianity is not adapted to the strength, the culture, and the advancement of the present day. It would arrest the attention of genius; it would infuse a new tone into the conversation of the higher circles; it would supply novel material for newspaper comment. Instead of the venal headings of newspaper articles, suppose we saw such headings as these—MR GLADSTONE, on the Forgiveness of Sins; THE LORD CHANCELLOR, on the Nature of Christian Faith; MR BRIGHT, on the Personality and Work of the Holy Ghost; LORD CAIRNS, on the Way of Salvation. Of course I know the ready answer of many. We shall be told that this would be “sensationalism;” but let us beware lest the devil find in that alarming word one of his easiest victories over Christian duty and Christian courage.

#### 708. *Mysteries.*

MYSTERIES! What are they but as the earth at night time, speeding on with swift wing to the all-revealing brightness of morning!

#### 709. *Christ our Only Model.*

WE do not say, “Look at Christians.” We say, “Look at Christ.” It is to Christ that we appeal continually; and in that appeal is our strength as Christian advocates or ex-

pounders of Christian truth. When a man says, "Look at the minister," I say, "Look at the Master!" When a man says, "What do you call this?" I say, "I call it a copy: yonder is the original—look at that!" When I am told that Christian professors are very unstable and inconsistent, I say, "True; but they are not bad because of their Christianity, but because of their want of it." Find in Jesus Christ one instance of selfishness; find in Him one moment's wandering from the right way; point out in His speech one unhallowed word or one ungenerous dishonourable expression. His life is before you. Hear me, and be just and true and manly and right! Find me in Christ's life one thing upon which you can lay your finger and say, "This is unholy," then you may pray God's lightnings to strike his Church and consume that which bears his name. When will men look at Christ, and not at Christians? at the sun, and not at the little taper? When will they look at the Redeemer, and not at the half-educated, incomplete, struggling, and oft-blundering Church?

#### 710. Love—the Heart's Eye.

THERE may be rough interpretations of the Divine presence as seen in the wonders of creation; for he would be a fool who could mistake the sun as having been written by any other hand than God's; he who reads only the writing on the face of Nature is as the letter-carrier, who reads only the outward address, not the wise and tender words written for the heart. Love is, so to speak, the faculty by which we apprehend God, without which we can never know more of Him than that He is a dread mystery.

#### 711. Suburban Life.

THERE are business men in our city to-day who have schemed for a future which, if analyzed, would disclose nothing but a careful regard for personal and domestic

*comfort.* I can give you the brief programme of such men : it runs after this fashion—Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements. I thought I could have mentioned a fifth object of pursuit, but I believe this exhausts the whole scheme. Now it is for them to say whether they will persist in urging this request. They are at perfect liberty to leave the City, to abandon the poor, to get away from all that is *foetid*, *noisome*, and otherwise offensive ; but let them beware lest, in reaching this supposed heaven, they find that they have gone in the wrong direction, and that where they expected heaven to begin they find that they have only reached the outward edge of earth. Men who make arrangements exclusively with a view to physical comfort never ask the questions which are the chief inquiries of souls that truly live. They do not say, What kind of preaching shall we have in the locality to which we propose to move ? What scholastic advantages will be available ? What libraries will be accessible ? No ! What they want is Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements—and they get them ; but the fruit which they had coveted so eagerly turns to ashes in their mouths !

### 712. God Reigneth.

THE whole world is in the hand of God, let us be thankful. The whole past is under His review, let us leave it with the assurance that His judgment is righteous. The whole future is under His control, let us pass into it with the steadiness, the quietness, and the majesty of those who know that all the resources of God are placed at the disposal of all who put their whole trust in His wisdom and love.

### 713. Demoniacal Possession—A Parable.

PICTURE to yourselves a man of lofty stature and beaming countenance, one of the noblest specimens of the human race—strong, dignified, majestic. Think of him sitting at the door of his dwelling as the summer sun is glowing in

the far west, having around him a group of loving children, who delight to call him "father," and vie with each other in many playful attempts to rouse him from an unusual fit of silence. They have never feared him; his approach has always added to their joy; they have ever hung upon him with undoubting trust and love. They had good reason to do so. Probably he had no superior in the country of which he was the pride. When strangers passed him, they turned to admire his towering stature and kingly carriage. Nor was there one sign of repelling haughtiness upon his noble face; at the sight of a little child it would expand into a luminous smile, and a tender concern would sadden it when in presence of tottering old age or incurable pain. It was no act of constrained courtesy, or pretentious condescension, on his part, to pick a wayside flower for an unknown child, or to guard infirm travellers from the dangers of the busy thoroughfare. What he did, he did with charming naturalness; what he said, he said with manly simplicity. No honest man ever had occasion to fear him; no unjust person could feel quite easy in his presence. A kind of spiritual sunlight seemed to accompany him, which not only caused his own character to stand out with perfect distinctness, but gave unexpected revelations of the character of others. His domestic life was a scene of happiness: adored by the wife of his youth, loved with all the love of his children's hearts, he was at rest in his house as a man without a suspicion or a fear—so strong, yet so tender; so mighty to defend, so gentle to console; courtly enough for the society of princes, simple enough for the plainest of his neighbours: his very presence was an inspiration; weak people felt that his strength was their own, young men set him before them as their ideal of manhood. One look would convince the observer that, to physical advantages of the highest rank, he added intellectual powers of no mean order: the form of his head, the steadiness and lustre of his piercing eye, the lines upon his face, showed that he was no stranger to careful and exciting thought. He had, indeed, long been accustomed to the kind of think-



ing that always brings suffering in its train—not cold speculation, but study that troubles the heart with many a bold assault upon its most valued trusts. There is a style of so-called thinking which is merely a mental amusement; there is also a thinking which strains the heart to the point of agony. The rugged lines cut into that solemn yet glowing face showed how much the heart had been engaged in this man's thinking. In many a lonely wandering in the deep ravine, and over the rocks which lay within easy distance of the splendid metropolis in which he resided, he had watched as if for an angel which should tell him Divine secrets, and had prayed to be saved from the delirium which comes of intellectual trespass upon the sacred provinces of God. Death had visited his house, and twice turned the cradle into a coffin, and he had not forgiven death for that great sorrow. The problem of Providence—the government which turns into a tormenting enigma the course of everyday affairs—he vainly attempted to solve, for he did but find in every answer another and deeper question. These experiences left their mark upon him: they ennobled, yet saddened, the expression of his countenance, and threw into his voice a chastened and pathetic tone. On the evening referred to he had been sitting at his door for most of an hour, in a silence which the mirth of his children could not thoroughly break: whilst looking at his little ones he seemed to be looking far beyond them; in answering their questions he seemed to be listening to unseen interrogators; and when his hand was put out towards them, it seemed as if an invisible power was pulling it in another direction. Only the sunset before he had sat in the same place, calm and even joyful—to-night he is as one hovering on the brink of a troubled world, through whose shadows he can see nothing of light.

## I.

Having this morning sanctified his house by praise and prayer addressed to the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, he proceeded to engage in his customary work.

Tender was his adieu to his household—not, perhaps, in reality tenderer than usual, certainly not intentionally so—yet, in the gloomy days which soon came upon her, his wife recalled with mournful satisfaction the pathos of his farewell. She knew that he had spent many hours in painful and fruitless endeavour to understand the ways of God amongst the children of men, and now and then, with all the skill of that blessed love which speaks from a distance that softens its tone to the ear of pain, she had sought to remind him of the manifold practical blessings with which human life had been enriched, and which should protect the mind from the insidious temptation which comes from the side of mystery. His recognition of these blessings was most graceful and emphatic, yet he turned from the light with anxious desire to dispel every shadow which lingered on the way of God. This morning his prayer was hardly free from implied reflection upon the government of the world, especially upon the permission of death to destroy the life of children; still there was nothing in his tone to indicate an unusual state of mind, or to excite uneasiness or apprehension. The mystery of the world had been to him so long a burden, that those who knew him best had ceased to wonder at the melancholy which shadowed his worship. On his way to the confines of the city, where awaited him the engagements of this particular day, a mighty wind suddenly arose; now it wailed as if in pain, and then it roared as if in defiance or triumph. For a moment it became subdued, and instantly it rushed in shattering shocks, and tore the trees which clothed the deep ravine, as if the very spirit of vengeance had been let loose upon them. No other traveller was in sight, yet a voice distinctly addressed the lonely man:

“Bitter, infinitely bitter,” said the Voice, in a whisper, which chilled him.

He paused: he looked, but there was no sign of a presence. He turned his eyes to the cloud which had just thrown a shadow over him, but no figure gave it shape or meaning.

"Yes," continued the unearthly Voice, drawing, if possible, still nearer the astounded man; "accursed be His power; may His throne fall and His sceptre rot. Amen—amen," it groaned, in a stifled manner.

The man, though brave and fearless in all the ordinary relations of life, was stricken with horror; hot drops started from his brow, to be followed quickly by a chill, which made him shiver. With parched and reluctant lips, he could only say:

"Who—what——"

And as he spoke it seemed as if heavy wings were softly flapping in the now quieter wind.

"Sitting there," continued the ghostly Voice, [in the same] sad tone; "sitting there with His feet upon the humbled world, seeing men perish and devils suffer, yet never spending a thought of mercy upon them; pleasing His vanity by making suns and blowing them out, keeping up a treacherous peace in His stately halls by driving away the noble angels that ask a question or suggest a doubt. O—O would I could strike off the pillars of His proud throne, and bring Him for one hour into the lake of fire!"

The Voice seemed to be nearer still, speaking not only in the ear, but in the very soul:

"Poor men—poor men; praying to a God who never hears them."

The lonely listener was bound to the spot, though anxious to move. He was under a spell which he had no power to break. The Voice was mightier than an arm.

"Man," said the Voice, with fuller emphasis, "speak freely to me and thou shalt be safe; I will comfort thee at least with such poor comfort as we can have so long as *He* drops the poison of His sovereignty into the fountains of the universe. I will watch thee, I will comfort thee, I will show thee where alone thou canst have a moment's rest. I will lead thee to a spot on which *He* seldom deigns to look, and which is therefore blest. Tell me, O man, though thou art strong in body, hast thou not had sorrows which darken and weaken the soul?"

The listener was dumb : self-control was utterly lost.

"Yes," continued the voice, "thy silence is right; we know thee well; thou hast had sorrow upon sorrow, even to the breaking of thy heart; thou hast no fool's brain, yet often has it been on the point of madness when thinking upon *His* crooked and unequal ways."

Suddenly there was a sound in the air as of much subdued yet mocking laughter, and in unconsciously turning, as if to see whence the sound proceeded, the eye of the traveller descried the dim outline of a procession moving towards the tombs.

"Again, again, and every hour," the voice continued; "see yonder, O man; knowest thou those that mourn? Knowest thou what they carry? It is their only child—their idol, and *He* allowed the little life to perish, whilst *He* was occupied in receiving the applauding hallelujahs of a servile host that would slay *Him* if they could. We saw the child die; we counted the bitter tears of those who loved him; we pitied but could not help the sufferers; and there they now go to lay on the banqueting-table of Death the very treasure of their hearts;" and as the Voice so said, the fiendish laughter was repeated.

"Thou rememberest, O man, when thine own little girl died?"

The listener fell to the ground, as if smitten by an irresistible arm.

"Thou dost; thy love hath an imperishable memory; that same night I was near thee; I saw thee again and again fall upon thy knees in a secret chamber, and I heard thy sobbing prayer to *Him* thou callest God. It was a useless prayer; *He* was making suns, and banishing angels, and raining fire into the bottomless pit, and doing other mighty things that better become a God than drying human tears. *He* could have spared thy little girl; she might have been with thee to-day." Again the air was shaken by a mocking sound, and the poor man clung to the dust as if in fear he should be borne away.

"And thy brightest boy, too, I remember; when he died.

I was there ; I saw thee smile at the child to comfort him, when thy manly heart was breaking with grief. I saw thee retire to wring thy helpless hands in mortal agony, and then come back to smile at the child ; I knew how much that smile cost thee ; I saw all the wonderful display of thine innocent hypocrisy, and I blessed thee for it. *He*, too, saw it, but *He* came not to thy help ; He looked coldly down through the courses of the stars, and allowed thee to suffer on through all the dreary hours ; He was playing with the lightning, He was marshalling the timid angels in eccentric order, He was showing His craven idolaters how grand a thing it is to be a God."

By this time there seemed to be a great number of invisible presences in the yet wailing, though less tempestuous, wind. The Voice continued as if its complaint would never end,—

"They who know nothing of Him call Him *Father*. I say it is a lie. He can see men lose their property, lose their children, lose their reason, and spend their days in drivelling idiotcy or raging madness, and never cease His star-making, His angel-taming, and His comet-driving. Could I pluck yonder key of hell from His fiery girdle"—[here the legion shook in concert with helpless rage or re-kindled ambition]—"O could I, could I escape that hateful eye that follows me everywhere ! Did He but sleep one hour in a hundred years, I would steal upon Him in His slumber, and He should be God no more ; I would sit upon His throne, and men should be blessed, little children should never die, no orphan should be found in all the earth, for tears there should be light and peace. Would that I were God !"

"Shall we dwell with thee, O man ?" said the Voice, after a momentary pause : "we will guard thee ; we will share thy griefs, and take nothing from thy little joy ; we will help thy thinking, and guide thee to right conclusions."

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Suddenly, in the very fulness of his strength, his countenance glowing with unnatural animation, the lonely man stood erect, and with frantic energy demanded—

"Who speaks to me of my girl in heaven—of my dear boy with God?"

But there was no change in the low, dull tone of the Voice. "Heaven," it said, "there is none for thy children, poor man, deluded by the hope that has mocked all ages; they die, and are as the glittering insects that perish; thou thinkest of them as winged angels rejoicing in the unclouded light. Alas! thy thought is but a dream; thy children are in yonder tombs, they are not in heaven."

"Lie, lie, cruel lie," screamed the frantic man, "what I hear is a lie! Rachel is in heaven; Benjamin is in heaven; my children are as angels in God's house!"

"O man deluded," said the Voice, "I tell thee, tell thee sadly, thou livest in a mocking dream; we pity thee, yet we teach thee truth; thy little children, dear for ever to the memory of thy love, are as lights blown out; thou couldst not find them in all the chambers of His blazing creation. Hear us, O man, hear us, and be wise. We know Him better than He can be known by the creatures of yesterday who call themselves men. Ten thousand thousand years have we watched Him from afar; He is a great God, making worlds that He may crush them, creating hearts that He may break them, kindling fires that He may torture all whom He dislikes: we have watched His ways through unnumbered ages; for unnumbered ages we have shivered at His footstool as unwilling suppliants; for unnumbered ages we have been crushed by His ponderous foot; it is only for want of equal strength that we have so suffered; our *spirit* is yet untamed; we hate His presence, we resent His rule, and though He makes our hell intolerable, we delight to curse Him to His face. Seest thou yonder pool which men call a sea? It is but a drop compared with the mighty waters with which we are acquainted. Oh, to have seen what our pitying eyes have beheld on those stormy deeps—husbands and wives, parents and children, crying through the tempest that *He* might come and help them, and just as their thrilling prayer reached the point of agony, a thundering billow has dashed the vessel into ruin, and the voice of prayer was heard no more,—*this* is God,—*this* is Father!"

The wind ceased, and as it subsided another Voice said—  
“We will return to thee, and comfort thee, at the time of the setting of the sun.”

## II.

There has been great commotion in the city to-day. Men who never spoke to each other before have been seen in deep conversation, and men who have long been mutually estranged have been brought together by some absorbing event. Groups have been suddenly formed, and suddenly dispersed. Little children have spoken to their parents with premature seriousness, and parents have gathered their children to their hearts with more than ordinary tenderness. The whole city, in short, has been roused, and all its customary movements have been checked by a most terrible paralysis.

“Poor man,” said an aged speaker, “I saw him almost flying in the direction of the warm springs, and God mercifully grant that I may never again see such an expression on the face of man.”

“Let us walk through one of the city thoroughfares, and learn what we can from one or two of the many excited and ever-changing groups.

“Never, never, did I see such a sight; poor woman, so young, so beautiful; her heart-breaking cries were intolerable; she insisted on throwing her arms around him, and in the most pitiful tones she asked if he did not know her—and did you ever see such a look as he gave her? Oh, those eyes, those eyes!”

“And as for his *strength*,” said another, “we were like little children in his hands; we threw fetters and chains upon him, but he snapped them like threads, and flung them from him with a fiendish yell of laughter—when we spoke to him about his children, he lifted his clenched hand and shook it in the face of the sun, and then he roared like a beast of the forest.”

“And so good he was to us all,” said a white-haired man,

bent by the burden of many years; "he never gave me an hour's pain, and when his mother lay a-dying she blessed him for an obedience that never wavered. He never caused sorrow to her who bare him: O my son, my son! would to God I had died before this day!"

"We are but at the beginning of trouble," said a grave-looking man, in a firm and reproachful tone, "I have foreseen this,—it does not take me by surprise; I forewarn you all—we have fallen on an evil time—man cannot blaspheme with impunity."

"Explain, explain; keep silence that he may explain!"

"To explain is easy," continued the undaunted speaker. "I met the infuriated man, and to me he unintentionally revealed the awful secret of his madness."

See how eagerly the crowd presses upon the speaker—how breathless is the silence!

"I was returning from the warm springs this morning, when I saw an excited figure approaching me; the head was uncovered; the hair was dishevelled; the eyes were like the balls of a tiger. The man came quite near me; he put his face close to mine, and through clenched teeth he said, with burning breath, in a long, hissing tone, '*Jesus Christ*,' and then passed away like a flying dart."

"Let the deceiver be destroyed," said many voices, "lest we and our children perish."

"He *must* be destroyed," continued the speaker, "or we shall fall under the just judgment of God; He will not give His glory unto another. It hath grieved me, as one who humbly sitteth in Moses' seat, to see how all the world hath gone after this deceiver, and how many of yourselves have given heed to his blasphemous doctrines—he is of that wicked One."

"Say not so," exclaimed a poor woman, whose eyes showed too plainly that to sorrow she was no stranger—a woman often called a "sinner."

"Enough!" said an earnest-looking man, "we do but waste time in useless words: we must arise and pursue the suffering man, and see if he can be recovered to those who



love him, to his venerable father and his crushed children. Are there not in all the city twelve men who will, in the strength of God, give themselves to the work of finding and taming this infuriated sufferer? I have known him from his youth; much did he trouble his mind with questions too high for creatures of a day; often he broke out into sudden prayer—he seemed to see the Invisible; the hard question was never out of his thoughts, yet many of us knew of his kindness to the poor”—[here there was a subdued murmur of approbation in the little crowd];—“and I am sure there must be twelve men in this metropolis who will give themselves to seek his restoration: that there be no confusion among us, hear me further—The man was seen by many in the street that is called Straight; he was traced to the dangerous side of the rocks, and when the most humane men dared not further follow him by reason of fear, they heard a cry among the tombs which caused their bones to tremble: among the tombs we shall surely find him this day—who will go, hoping in the blessed God to be saved from all evil?”

“What about his home?” inquired an unknown voice; “he may return, and slay those who love him.”

“Let his home be watched by strong men,” said the speaker; “his wife and children must be guarded, for nought is so terrible as the madness of love.”

“Let him see his children, and he will be recovered of his plague: Jesus Christ loves children,” said a young woman who carried her first-born in her arms.

“No, no,” said the lost man’s father, “that will never do. His poor children would not know him. I can never forget their scream when they saw him this morning; they will not be calm for many days—Oh, my son, my son!”

### III.

How sadly the days and weeks passed in the darkened home of those who most deeply mourned this heavy affliction can never be explained. In that gloomy abode there

was but one topic of conversation, and all griefs were forgotten in the one absorbing sorrow. Life was no longer a joyous progress; it was but a dull oscillation between the happy past and the dreaded future. It was long before the children had courage to pass the threshold of the home which had now become a prison. Often in their innocent sleep did they shudder as if in alarm, and by day many a piercing question was left unfinished lest their mother's spirit should be utterly overwhelmed. Too soon did those little children learn the art of self-restraint in their mother's presence—too soon was it laid upon them to find a hiding-place for many a question in their own suffering hearts. Yet, time brought a measure of healing to the children. Little by little they felt prepared to play in the sunshine; little by little they yielded themselves to the cheerfulness natural to their tender years, though they never quite escaped the shadow of their mother's abiding grief. No sunlight ever penetrated that cloud; it turned her life into one continuous and most melancholy night. Do not all great changes come suddenly? Does not God try us and strengthen us by the apparent abruptness of His interpositions? Morning comes gradually, and night comes by an appointed course; yet God often comes as if in haste, and not seldom arises upon us from unexpected places.

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed one of the children who had been playing at some little distance from her home, "Oh, mother! I have seen our father; he will be here in a moment."

Instantly every precaution was taken to guard the house; and a low wailing prayer escaped the poor woman's trembling lips as she gathered her pale and quaking children around her. The little messenger had given no false alarm, but, instead of the shattering blow which was expected, the door was touched by a gentle hand.

"It cannot be father, dear," whispered the mother; "I must ask who it is."

The answer was given in a manly and most pathetic voice—

"Let me come in, my blessed ones—have no fear—I have seen *Jesus*, and He has made all things new!"

The woman's love—oh, so divine, so inexhaustible is that pure love—admitted of no suspicion: in a moment she was locked in her husband's mighty yet gentle embrace, and his children clung to him, and screamed for very joy. Yes, it was he; the clear eyes were full of the brightness of love; the manly voice was the richer for the emotion which made it tremble; there was no sign of painful thought on the open brow; he seemed to be invested with the freshness and bloom of renewed youth, and to have gotten the victory over the fear of death.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Blessed be the Christ of God!" sobbed the poor woman.

"Yea, blessed for evermore," said the recovered man; and a befitting silence fell on the weeping, yet grateful and adoring group.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Oh, to have seen Him is heaven! You cannot tell how dear He is to my heart. Other men sought me, but their very kindness seemed to be selfish. I thought I saw hypocrisy in their very earnestness; but when *Jesus* spoke to me——;" and the rest was said in many tears.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I wanted to remain with Him—to keep close to His side—never to be out of His sight any more; but He said to me (and oh, it was so *like* Him), 'Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.' These are His blessed words."

"And ever blessed be His dear name," said the poor woman; "He has been thy Saviour and mine."

"And blessed be the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who has sent His Son to save poor men. *Jesus* tells of no new God. He says God is love, and that God would not willingly let any man die. Oh, you should see Him and hear Him, so beautiful is the expression of His countenance, so tender and so grand are the tones of His blessed voice!"

"And Jesus Himself sent you to us?" the thankful wife inquired.

"Yes, or I never could have come. The devil took me away and Jesus sent me back. The devil would break up all happy homes, and Jesus would make all homes happy. The devil put bad thoughts into my mind: he made me suspect God's goodness; he pretended to sympathize with me in the great sorrows we had endured; he made me great promises, and I madly believed him. . . . Thou canst never know what I have suffered. Thou hast never wandered through the cold, cold chambers of death, Thou knowest not the torment of hell. . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

The rejoicing wife had many a question to ask. Gladly would she have known all the bitterness of the cup which her husband had drunk; yet, as a wise woman, she never made one reference to the awful past. She ever spoke of the bright future, and never did her tone give suspicion of despair. She was to her husband as another Saviour. She listened well, and when explanation failed, she pondered the mystery in heart.

The youngest of the little children was as attentive as the rest; the large tears stood in her dilated and glowing eyes, and when the narrative ceased she said, with a pathos mighty in its simplicity—"Dear Jesus."

An aged man, tottering on his staff, came into the house, and comprehending at a glance all that had happened, paused for a moment—for a moment only—and then said in stifled tones, "This my son was dead and is alive again!"

#### 714. First Beginning of the Gospel—God.

THE beginning of the Gospel is, of course, to be found in the thought and love of God. We may cast our lines back as far as we can through the ages of eternity, and we shall never be able to find the point at which God's concern for the welfare of the universe that was to be first began, and yet the Lamb of God is said to have been slain from before the foundation of the world. The sacrifice of Christ was not

an afterthought on the part of the Divine Being ; it was, so to speak, part of Himself, an element of His very God-head and of His very existence. So that, if we are really to go back to what may be termed the beginning of beginnings, we shall have to search the depths of the Divine existence, and follow all the wonderful and infinite course of the Divine thinking and purpose and love. There, of course, we are lost. Our hearts can only point, as it were, towards that great solemn mystery. Explanation we have none. Special indication is entirely beyond our power. We are lost in wonder, and our wonder is lost in speechlessness.

#### **715. Second Beginning of the Gospel—Christ.**

THE second beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is found in the incarnation of God's Son. We begin the next time at Bethlehem. We were lost when it was a mere question of unuttered and in speech unutterable love. We only begin to think and to feel and to understand in part God's meaning, when He utters His love not in speech, but in the person, the flesh and blood of God's dear Son. We can begin there—little children can begin at that point ; our love can commence its study at the cradle of our Lord Jesus Christ. Creatures like ourselves need alphabets, beginnings, sharp lines, visibilities. We are not all pure mind ; we cannot dwell upon the abstract, the unconditioned, the absolute, the infinite, in matters of this kind. We need some one to look at, to speak to, to go up to quite closely, and to hear speak the language of the love of God. This is what may be termed the second beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### **716. Third Beginning of the Gospel—The Church.**

WHERE then are we to look for the third beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God ? We look for it in the Church. As He was, so are we to be in the world. We are to be "living epistles, known and read of all men." When men ask, "Where is Christ ?" we are to show them

Christianity. And when they ask, "What is Christianity?" we are to show them the Church. Meanwhile, indeed, an incomplete representation of the truth, yet Jesus Christ Himself claims it, and devolves upon the Church the responsibility not only of bearing His name by exemplifying His life, but of interpreting His doctrine and living upon His love.

#### **717. The Church of Christ.**

WE don't treat the Church as a mere accident; we do not regard even the visible Church as something that is of the nature of an ordinary human association. It is more than a society; it is more than a club; more than a confraternity based upon kindred social sympathies. It is the embodied doctrine and love of Christ; and in so far as it falls short of that embodiment, it has yet to be crucified, purged with fire, and searched by the light of God.

#### **718. Trusting to Reason.**

"WE are taking our own course because we believe in our own reason. We follow our own judgment; we are asserting the right of our own thinking." Fools, madmen! Who gave you any spark of reason you have? Is it your own? did you bargain for it, buy it? How was that little lamp lighted, by whose flickering spark you are trying to grope your way through the dark and perilous unknown? He who gave the insect instinct, power of thinking about its own little world and planning its own little day's work, gave you your reason; and it would be quite as reasonable, if it were at all possible, that the ants and the conies and the locusts and the spiders should call a conference and council to take each others' advice about working out their own independent judgment, as it is for men to think they can do without God and find their way without the light which is above the brightness of the sun.

**719. "Abundantly Pardon."**

WHEN God forgives, He does not merely pardon, barely pardon,—He does not by some great straining effort of His love, just come within reach of the suppliant, and lay upon his heart the blessing which is besought. He pardons with pardons! He multiplies to pardon! When He casts our sins away, it is not into a shallow pool, it is into the depths of the sea; when He throws it away, it is not on one side, it is *behind* him. Will you arithmeticians measure the distance which is meant by *behind the infinite*? When God takes a man's sins away from him, He puts them as far from him as the east is from the west. Can you tell how far the east is from the west? It is an expression that is often upon your lips. Have you ever measured the distance? You can't, it is an immeasurable line. So, when God comes to pardon us, He does not merely pardon, just pardon, by the very uttermost possibility pardon, but He pardons with pardons, with pardons again and again, wave upon wave, until we say, "Thou hast done exceeding abundantly above all that we ask."

**720. Palace of Truth Unexplorable.**

No man who knows himself and who knows God will say that he has been led into all the chambers of God's great palace of truth. This is the sign of progress; this is the charter of the profoundest humility. The more we know the less we know. We see certain points of light here and there, but the great unexplored regions of truth stretch mile on mile beyond all our power to traverse the wondrous plain. How is it with us to-day then? Are we fagged men, exhausted students? Do we sit down under the impression that there is nothing more to be known? If we have that idea let us seek to recover our strength and to recover our inspiration by the word,—He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. There are attainments we have not made, depths we have not

sounded, and heights, oh, heights! We can but look up and wonder, expect, adore. If this be so, we ought to look calmly, with a feeling of chastened triumph, upon all hinderances, difficulties, and obstacles in the way of Christ's kingdom upon the earth. We may look at these in relation to our own puny strength, and quail before them.

### 721. God All-powerful.

WE are not to depend upon our own resources, but upon God's, in attempting the removal of everything that would intercept the progress of His holy kingdom in the world. There is a great mountain: I cannot beat it down, all the instruments I can bring to bear, upon it seem utterly powerless. But God touches the mountains and they smoke. The Alps, the Apennines, the Pyrenees, and great Himalayas, shall go up like incense before him, and His kingdom shall have a smooth uninterrupted way. There are combinations which I cannot disentangle. Conspiracies of the heathen against God and His Son, political conspiracies, social combinations, of which I can make nothing as a poor solitary worker. I can but kneel down before them and pray God to show the greatness of His strength. In a peculiar manner He will touch the reason of such conspirators and they will become jabbering maniacs in a moment. Sometimes He will touch the speech of such conspirators, and they will not understand what they are saying to one another. Sometimes in passing by, He will touch the earth with His finger: silently it will open and swallow them up.

### 722. Nature's Triumph over Art.

HERE is a very clever artist, who has made a beautiful thing he brings before us, and we gather round it and say, "It is most exquisitely done. What is this, sir?" "That," replies the artist, "is my notion of a flower, and I am going to call that flower a rose." "Well, it is a beautiful thing, —very graceful, and altogether beautifully executed: you are very clever." So he is, and now that exhausts his no-



tion of the rose. But let God just hand in a full-blown rose from the commonest garden in the world, and where is your waxen beauty? Let Him just send the sweet spring morning in upon us, with the first violet, and all your artificial florists, if they have one spark of wit left, will pick up their goods and go off as soon as possible. The meanest insect that flutters in the warm sunlight is a grander thing than the finest marble statue ever chiselled by the proudest sculptor.

### 723. *Imagination : an Unhealthy Diet.*

IMAGINATION never thinks; it only dreams. Imagination never reasons; it flies away, not knowing whither it is going. Imagination is never sober; it is always intoxicated with burning desire. I might challenge you to tell me whether you are not living lives of riotous imagination; dreaming of new plans of securing wealth, of novel projects for the defrauding of unsuspecting men, and whether in this awful excitement you are not forgetting the common duties of life. Men cannot always live upon the wings of their imagination; they must stand still, pause, think, reason, pray, and then, if their imagination can assist them to overcome difficulties, they are at liberty to follow all the will of their fancy. Let us take our starting-point from simple truth; let us hold deep and solemn consultation with the Spirit of Righteousness; let us know that our greatest power is little more than weakness; and then we shall walk without stumbling; and though our tower be not built very loftily, it will be built with a stability which God Himself will never allow to be shaken.

### 724. *Trials a Test.*

MANY men are distressing themselves, when they think of their trials, by imagining that they must have done something wrong, or God never could have sent such afflictions to them personally or to their household. That is a mistake. There are trials that are simply tests, not punish-

ments; trials of faith and patience; not rods sent to scourge men because they have been doing some particular evil thing. God's people are tried. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." The honour is not in the trial, it is in the spirit in which the trial is borne.

#### 725. *The Mission of Trials.*

TAKE the trial impatiently, with murmuring against God, and we shall be the worse for our trial, the poorer for our suffering. Take the trial as a veiled angel sent by our Father to say things to us which no other messenger could so suitably convey, then even the rod shall be precious to us, and the herald's utterances of God shall have music in them that shall comfort and revive and cheer the heart.

#### 726. *The Danger of Fortune.*

SOME men cannot bear promotion. It is dangerous to send little boats far out into the sea. Some men are clever, sharp, natty, precise, wonderfully well informed, newspaper fed and fattened, and yet, if you were to increase their wages just a pound a week, they would lose their heads. That is a most marvellous thing, and yet nobody ever thought he would lose his head with such an increase of fortune. But it is a simple fact, that some men could not bear to step out of a dungeon into a palace: it would kill them. What helps a man to bear these changes of fortune, whether they be down or up? God,—He can give a man gracefulness of mien when he has to walk down, and God can give him enhanced princely dignity when he has to walk up; a right moral condition, a right state of heart, the power of putting a proper valuation upon prisons and palaces, gold and dross. Nothing but such moral rectitude can give a man security amidst all the changes of fortune or position in life.

#### 727. *Tenants at Will.*

Now and then God comes down just to say, "You men are only tenants at will; you are not proprietors, you are

not even leaseholders. Boast not yourselves of to-morrow !” We should get to think that the wheat-fields and the vineyards were all ours, if the Great Proprietor did not come down now and then and breathe upon them that they should wither away,—if He did not now and then withhold the dew, so that the roots of the earth cannot be nourished,—if, now and again, He did not send a plague through the air to proclaim to men that they hold things but for a moment, and ought to hold them in the spirit of stewardship.

### 728. *Negative v. Positive Living.*

If you like you can live a strictly negative life ; you can be let alone ; you can have the reputation of being innocent, inoffensive, harmless young men ; you can be well-dressed cyphers ; you need never mix up in the world's fray ; you need never send a sword upon the earth, nor need you ever kindle a fire against which the children of evil shall cry out : you can have all these requests if you like, but let me tell you openly, that having realized your desire, your souls will have declined in all that is lofty and pure and godlike. On the other hand, you can be “ heroes in the strife ” : you can associate yourselves with ideas that create revolution ; you can follow leaders who are never afraid of danger, and who are most courageous in the presence of all that is oppressive ; in all this you need not be impertinent, immodest, self-asserting,—all this can be done with the loveliest humility, with the sublimest self-sacrifice. You can be known as a terror to evil-doers ; your name can become a name that shall be detested of all men that love darkness, and that work evil greedily with both hands ; and if you elect so to be and so to do, your souls will be called to the highest prosperity with which God can bless them, you will have a consciousness of peace and an enjoyment of hope which can come to you by no other process than that of the fullest self-sacrifice and the most determined action on behalf of principles that are Divine and eternal.

**729. Uses of Denominationalism.**

THERE are a great many denominations, and I do not regret it. I believe that denominationalism, wisely managed, may be used for mutual provocation to love and to good works. It may be better that we should be broken up externally, that each may do his own work in his own way, than that we should be bound together by merely nominal uniformity.

**730. The Sublimest Idea.**

THERE is no announcement so sublime in language, so grand as a conception, as, that in the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth. This is the account which satisfies my own mind, and the desire of my own heart, and this I say after having endeavoured patiently and carefully to examine other accounts on the same matter. I believe that God created the light of the day, that He spreads the darkness of the night, that every star is His, and every blade of grass is a proof of His power and His wisdom and His care. I see Him in the wonderful house He has built, and I believe that, not only did He build the house, but that He sustains it; that every morning He says, "Let there be light," and the light appears; that every day, and all day long, He reviews the fountains of life, and sets in order all the arrangements of His great house. I find Him busy every day; He never slumbers, He never sleeps. All living things wait upon Him, and He giveth them out of the fulness of His hand day by day.

**731. Stoop for Happiness.**

No man can be permanently unhappy who looks into the cradles of the poor and lonely, as Pharaoh's daughter looked into the ark of bulrushes. Go by the river's side, where the poor lost child is, and be a father and a mother to him if you would have happiness in the very core of your hearts! Even a king's daughter is the richer and gladder for this

stoop of love. Some of us have been trying to reach too high for our enjoyments; the blooming fruit has been beyond our stature; we have therefore turned away with pining and discontent, not knowing that if we had bent ourselves to the ground we should have found the happiness in the dust, which we attempted in vain to pluck from inaccessible heights.

**732. Worship Elevating.**

HE who worships the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, must, in all the qualities of his soul, in all the relations of his life, be a *better* man than the atheist, than the man who denies the existence of God. The man who worships a stone is a better man than he who worships nothing. The man who falls down before carven wood, or worships the beasts of the field, is a grander nature than he who never bows head in prayer, and never lifts up his heart in aspiration and religious desire. The tendency of worship is to elevate our nature. He who worships sincerely, however ignorantly, is the better for his worship; he is enlarged in his nature, his outlook upon things is widened, he is led away from self-trust, and is taught to depend upon a power, not lower, but higher, and in his estimation better, than his own.

**733. The Holy Ghost the Perfecter of Conscience.**

YOU say you know a crooked line from a straight one. So you do, but only up to a given point. It is only when the line is *very crooked* that you know it to be so. There are deflections from perpendicularity and straightness that the eye cannot detect; there is no bricklayer and no carpenter that would trust his work to his unassisted eye. The most skilled and trained man says, "If I am building this wall, or putting up this wood work, I must have with me my plumb-line and my square; I must have a standard outside of myself; I must not rest entirely upon the criticism and judgment of my unassisted eye." What if it be precisely

the very thing, with spiritual meanings and spiritual applications, that we insist upon in relation to the higher life? You have an eye that can distinguish the crooked from the straight; you have a conscience that can tell wrong from right. But as in the one case you need something more to make it critically correct, so in the second case you need the Divine revelation and God the Holy Ghost to make your conscience perfect in its sense of right and wrong, absolute in its judgment as between the quality of one action and another.

#### 734. God using Unlikely Agents.

GOD calls unlikely persons to do His work. We should have said, "Now, seeing that there is a very painful communication to be made to the aged prophet Eli, get some old, experienced man to break the tidings to him, so to adapt the message that the venerable prophet may not be overwhelmed; it must be done prudently, with much measurement of tone and communication." So *we* should say; but God says, "Child, I want thee;" He puts into the child His terrible revelation, and the child speaks it.

#### 735. Effects of Faith in God the Son.

LET a man believe fully in God, as revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and a new sensitiveness is given to his conscience; he no longer loses himself in the mazes of a cunning casuistry; he goes directly to the absolute and final standard of righteousness; all moral relations are simplified; moral duty becomes transparent; he knows what is right, and does it; he knows the wrong afar off, and avoids it. Before he received the Christian idea of God and worship according to the spirit and law of Jesus Christ, he could hoodwink himself, that last act of wickedness! He could put his own moral eyes out, and imagine that having closed his own vision he had extinguished all spiritual light; he could regard the flame of a candle as sufficient, without consulting the light of the sun; he could mistake a maxim

for a principle, and justify by usage what he never could defend by righteousness. But now that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is in him, now that he looks at everything from a Christian stand-point, he takes a spiritual view of every question and every duty; he examines the shades and colours of his life by God's light; and he is ashamed, with unspeakable shame, of the chicanery which enfeebled and disgraced his former existence.

### 736. Getting Beyond the Old Testament.

I AM afraid that some of us imagine that we have got beyond the Old Testament, and therefore hardly ever turn to its ancient pages. Believe me, the Testaments are one: as the day is one—the twilight and the noon-tide; as the year is one—the vernal promise and the autumnal largess; so are the Testaments of God one. And no man can profoundly interpret the New Testament who is not profoundly conversant with the Old. A man will come upon the New Testament from a wrong point altogether, except he come upon it along the line of Moses and the minstrels of Israel and the prophets of Zion. He who comes so will find it to be a New Testament in the best sense; the Old re-pro-nounced; the Old set forth in a new light and brought to bear with wider and more vital applications. Have we read the law? Are we really conversant with all the old state-ments about sin and duty? Do we know the history of human kind as it is written in the Old Testament? If not, we are unprepared for the deepest and truest consideration of the new covenant.

### 737. God's Resources.

Look at that great cloud of fire. Do you see it? "Yes." Tell me what it is. Let the scientific man tell you. It is a comet. You speak about your great globe, what say you to that immensity? What is your great globe in diameter? "Why, about eight thousand miles, we have always been given to understand." Why, the diameter of the head of

the comet, science says—not theology, not a fanatical zealot—science says, is nine hundred and forty-seven thousand miles in diameter,—a hundred thousand of your little globes, and twenty thousand more thrown in! Look at its wondrous train! How long is that train? “Two thousand miles—five hundred thousand miles—ten millions?” Away with your guessing! Science says, I have measured that train, and it is one hundred and thirty-two millions of miles long. And are these the arrows with which the quiver of the Almighty is filled? Can He strike with these terrible weapons? The infidel says, “Ah, it’s all—” and then he waves his hand as if that settled everything. Jesus tells you, it is a messenger of the Almighty that is running, along the breath of His own purpose; and that finding its way through the universe it shall never stagger, it shall not disturb the tiniest asteroid in the great glory of the universe! I prefer to believe Jesus. It is more in keeping with reason, sense, common judgment, to believe that great wise Teacher. To Him I have committed my soul. If He is wrong, I would rather be in His company—looking at all His life, the beauty of His character, the sublimity of His disposition—than I would be elsewhere. With Him I live, with Him; if need be, I would choose to die!

### 738. Boldness *v.* Timidity.

**THERE** is a boldness which is consistent with the purest modesty, and there is a timidity which thinly disguises the most abject cowardice.

### 739. A Grand Aim.

**MAKE** heaven your aim!

“Complain not that the way is long—  
What road is weary that leads there?  
But let the angel take thy hand,  
And lead thee up the misty stair,  
And there with beating heart await,  
The opening of the golden gate.”



**740. Folly of Walking by Sight.**

IMAGINE a man who disbelieves everything he cannot see with his naked eye. Suppose that it should come to pass to-morrow that everything shall be taken away which cannot be read by the naked eye, or that has not been discovered by the naked eye. What will come? Shut up the heavens, for astronomy must go; and cover over the fields, for botany shall tell but little to the naked eye. All science, indeed, would be impoverished, insulted, degraded. Yet the man who cannot read his own mother's letter without the aid of an eye-glass, insists upon reading the infinite and eternal God by his own unassisted powers; says, that whatsoever is too mysterious for his natural understanding is but worthy of insult, degradation, and contempt. I charge him, before God's face, with insulting his own common sense and contradicting the highest experiences of mankind.

**741. On Bearing Testimony.**

EVERY man must bear his testimony in his own way. Standing in a watchmaker's shop near noonday, I was surprised to find how many different ways there are of announcing twelve o'clock. One bell tolled it out in most solemn tones, leaving a considerable space between the resounding notes; another rattled off the hour in a most flippant manner, and seemed to say to the first, "Get on with you; put some spirit into your work; don't stand droning there!" One clock spoke with a silvery voice; another gave its message with a shivering clang; a third repeated the hours as if burdened with the effort; a fourth, having struck twelve very cheerfully, began to chime most sweetly.

Every man, like every clock, has his own way; the one important thing is to keep true time, and not to be ashamed to tell it.

**742. The Poetry of Faith.**

THE time will come when a word will be enough ; if the word be the right word, it need not be multiplied. Its force is in its unity ; its victory is in its intensity and concentration. Is this possible,—that we shall have but to say to the poet, when he has his harp in fullest sublimest tune, “The Lord hath need of thee,” and at once he will begin the praise of Emmanuel ? Is it possible that the time will come when we shall need to say to the man of money but one word, “The Lord hath need of thy gold,” and the coffers which have not seen the daylight for many a year will fly open at the utterance of that simple word ? when we shall have but to go to the young man of education and intellectual power and say, “The Lord hath need of thee,” and instantly he will spring to the front and say, “Lord, speak, thy servant heareth.” Is it possible that the time can ever come when we shall have but to say to the daily newspaper, that last of the atheists, “The Lord hath need of thee,” and we shall have less of the drama and the racing-ground and the billiard table, and a little more at least of that which saves England from damnation and the highest life of the world from putrefaction ? *That* will be the victory of victories !

**743. Crumbs of Prophecy.**

THAT Christ should go into Jerusalem upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass ! That is not decorative talk ; that is not mere flowery prophecy, or incidental or tributary foretelling. In all that we should account little and of inconsequential moment is fulfilled to the letter. What then ? If God be careful of such crumbs of prophecy, such little detailed lines of prediction, what of the life of His children, the redeemed life of His Church ? If not one tittle could fall to the ground respecting things of this kind—matters of order, arrangement, sequence—is He unfighteous to forget the greater when He remembers the less ? Will He count

the hairs upon your head, and let the head itself be bruised : Will He paint the grass, and let the man fall to decay ? Is He careful about birds floating in the air, and careless about lives redeemed by the sacrificial blood of His Son ? The argument is an argument *a fortiori*. If He can do this for the little, what of the great ? If He can fulfil this testimony about the ass, and the colt the foal of an ass, and the particular method of going into a city, what will He do when He comes to the question of delivering the souls of His children from captivity, and saving the hearts of those who have put their trust in Him ? See ! Christian reader and Christian sufferer, man often bent down to the dust by reason of heavy burdens : I find in this care about the minutest lines of prophecy an assurance by implication that they are infinitely safe who are in their Father's keeping.

#### 744. Preaching v. Writing.

I ALWAYS say to friends, "Never write a letter if you can help it, because nobody can read it." I have written letters to people, and they have been offended with them, and they have not spoken to me for six weeks,—perhaps gone on the other side of the street,—and I have not known how to account for it. It has come to pass that I have written them a letter which has given them great offence. "Let me see the letter." I read the letter to them, and it is a new letter ! They did not read it so ; they had missed their stops, and misplaced the emphasis. They did say every word that was in the letter, but not as the writer intended the words to be said. Herein is the glory of preaching over writing,—that every man by his very tone is an interpreter, and by his very accent is a revealer, of Divine things.

#### 745. Holiness of God's House.

THIS house is made holy, not by any form or words devised by man,—but the holy quiet, the holy hymn, the cry of prayer, the exposition of God's book, separates such places

as these from the common world, and makes them emphatically houses of prayer.

**746. The Highest Ministry understood.**

CHILDREN understand by feeling, by the heart, a good many more things than they can explain. So it is with what are called poor uneducated hearers of the Gospel. I dare say there are men—at least there were, I believe—who thought that if they expended all their strength upon their sermons the people would not understand them, so they just treated them to anything that came to hand; and the people left them. Then they said that they were not appreciated! I believe uneducated hearers do understand the very highest ministry,—the ministry that has light in it, and pathos, and sublimity; and the children's heart-understanding brings them to the house of God whenever there is present a man who can anyway get at them, excite their little hearts, rouse their tender feelings, and make them glad.

**747. Limitations of Power.**

It is important to know the difference between quantities which are variable and quantities which are fixed. This knowledge may save us a great deal of trouble, and prevent very much pain. Can your teeth bite the rock? However hungry you are, is there strength in your jaw to bite the granite? Can your feet stand upon the flowing river? Can you lay your finger upon the lowest of all the stars that shine in heaven? A thousand such questions show that we are hemmed in by the impassable; we walk upon the edge of a gulf; and our mightiest endeavours show us that after all we are only beating ourselves against the bars of a great cage! A painted cage, but a cage still—a cage lamplit, but a cage still.

**748. A Meaning in Everything**

EVERYTHING in life has a meaning. Mistakes have their meanings. Misunderstandings will often lead to the highest harmonies.

**749. The Supremacy of God.**

THERE is one Lord, and His name is the key which opens every lock; His name is the mighty power which beats down every mountain and every wall, and makes the rough places plain.

**750. Uncharitableness.**

THERE is a tendency to believe charges against men without patiently and carefully going into particulars, without making such moral inquest into them as ought alone to justify our belief in any charge that may be made against a human creature. We are prone to say, when an accusation is lodged against a man, "After all there must be something in it." We reason that it is impossible to get up a charge against a man without that charge having, at least, some foundation. We think it charitable to add, "That probably it is not quite so bad as it looks, yet after all there must be *something* in it."

**751. The Fellowship of Forgiveness and Suffering.**

CAN any man forgive without suffering? Can a man take back even his own wicked son without first stretching his fatherly heart on the cross? When a father sheds tears over his rebellious child, he carries his anger to the sublimest point. God's hatred of sin is best seen, not in His frowns, but in His tears. Hell does not afford the most impressive view of God's estimate of sin. When Christ said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," He did more to show the horror in which He held sin than could have been shown in all the fire that glows and blazes

throughout the universe. We best know the intensity of human anger when it settles into deep human sorrow; so we see God's hatred of sin more in the storm of grief which Christ endured than if the angry heavens had shot lightning into every point of space. God suffered more than the sinner can ever suffer on account of sin. Does not the parent suffer more than the sinning child? The sinner by his very sinfulness lessens his own capacity of suffering, while virtue is shocked through every sensibility.

#### **752. Power of Kindness.**

KINDNESS will do more than mere power. A father will always do more than a ruler. The ruler will work by law, by stipulations, by technical covenants, he will consult the letter of the regulations and he will abide by the bond. But the father will interpret by his heart; he will avail himself of all the suggestions of love; he can't be bound by the narrowness and limitations of the letter,—he does not work by the clock, he works by his heart.

#### **753. Intellectual Expansion.**

A MAN can't increase his height one inch, and yet I find nowhere a limit to intellectual supremacy and to the expansion of intellectual power. Your body has done growing, but your mind may just have begun to look at the alphabet of truth. When the animal has reached the utmost limit of its capability, the intellectual, the Divine may go on increasing, expanding, refining, for God constantly says to the faithful servant, "Thou' hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Whatsoever a man's mind legitimately attains, God still says, "Come up higher."

#### **754. An Excuse for Sin.**

HERE is a minister of the Gospel, who says he is going to withdraw from the ministry and retire into private life. He has been so annoyed by circumstances which have arisen

around him ; he has been so fretted and chafed by a multitude of things, that he can no longer endure them ; and now he is going to enjoy the retirement of private life. That is his statement. What does it amount to ? He is going to run away because there are some difficulties in life. As if he ever could get into any sphere in this world where difficulty would not call upon him, and force its attention upon his reluctant soul ! Has the man told all the case ? has he not kept back part of the price ? is he not rather arranging his circumstances so that he can sin with larger license,—that he can do things in private life which he dare not do under the responsibilities of a public position ?

#### 755. *The Summer-maker.*

THERE are some things which the *Master* only can do. Will you go and prepare summer for us ? You might try. You have seen half a hundred summers : now you go, and try to make the fifty-first ! Come ! You are an artificer ; you have the organ of form largely developed ; you have an eye for beauty ; you can buy oils and paints and colours and canvas and brushes of all kinds. Why don't you go and prepare *summer* for us ? The Great Master, looking down upon this little under-world of his—this basement story of his great building—says, “ I am going to prepare the summer for you.” And He makes no noise, He makes no mistakes in His colours, never gets things into discord. He continually renews the face of the earth, and not a man in all the busy boastful world can do it ! If the servant cannot prepare the *summer*, how could He prepare *heaven* ? If the saint exhausts himself when he lights a candle, how could he fill the great heavens with the morning that should never melt into sunset ?

#### 756. *Spiritual Experience.*

SPIRITUAL experience must be looked at as a whole. It is not right to fix attention either upon this side or upon that, to the exclusion and the forgetfulness of the other.

One side is very dark and full of sadness, sharply inclined towards despair; the other is brighter than the summer morning, tuneful, sunned with all the lustre of saintly hope: so we must take the night with the morning, if we would have the complete day.

#### 757. Partnerships.

I HAVE been a good deal puzzled about some partnerships. I have known some strange associations. For example, I have known a Church officer, who has led the devotions of the Church, enter into partnership with a grovelling man who never hesitated to use profane language in the warehouse. I have known a generous supporter of good institutions associated with a man who would have sold his own father if he could have made money by the transaction. This has been a puzzle to me, because I have not known how two could walk together except they were agreed, and because I have gone upon the principle that light could have no communion with darkness. I dare say there are explanations of the difficulty. It may be very convenient to have a partner who can make promises which he never intends to fulfil; it may smooth some parts of the commercial path to have an associate who can tell lies; it may be profitable to have an ally who can stoop to pick money out of the gutter, and who can wriggle round awkward corners, and use words which admit of two different constructions. All this, I can see, may be very convenient and profitable, but how about the righteousness of it? How does it look in the light of the sanctuary? Is it honest, true, lovely, pure?

#### 758. Atonement of Christ.

JESUS CHRIST did not die for a few of us, He tasted death for every man. He did not in His great heart think of this little nationality, or that. He is the propitiation for our sins, and *not for ours only*, but for the sins of the whole world. Yonder Man does not think of little pieces or of



parts of things, when He thinks He thinks eternities, when He loves He loves entireties. No fraction could ever satisfy His infinite love. Let that be a Gospel to your hearts, and let those who have been hesitating about this Gospel drop their little wretched verbal criticisms and hear this appeal, the appeal that claims the world, whose love, like a golden band, binds the whole creation in one unbroken circumference.

### 759. Prudence.

THE child who has only sailed his paper boat on the edge of a placid lake, might wonder what was wanted with enormous beams and bars of iron, innumerable bolts and screws, and clasps and bars of metal, in making a ship; ask the sailor, and he will answer; he says we must be prepared for something more than calm days, we must look a-head, the breakers will try us, the winds will put us to the test, we may come upon an unknown rock, we must be prepared for the worst as well as for the best. We call this prudence. We condemn its omission. We applaud its observance. What of men who attempt the stormy and treacherous waters of life without having had any regard to the probable dangers of the voyage?

### 760. Usurping God's Throne.

GOD says He will remove the mountains and hills for us; why should we turn away His mighty arm? He claims such work as His own; why should we meddle with it as if we could do it better than He? But some of us *will* meddle: we persist in seeking omnipotence in our own hands, and trying to reach the tone which winds and seas obey. We *will* do it. The devil urges us, and we yield. He says, "Be your own God," and we snatch at the suggestion as a prize. He says, "*This* little mountain you might surely manage to remove;" and then we set to work with pickaxe and shovel, and lo, the mountain grows as we strike it! Still the devil says, "It stands to reason

that you *must* be making some impression upon it; try again;" and we try again, and again we fail—the mountain does not know us, the rock resents our intrusion, and having wasted our strength, the devil laughs at our impotence, and tells us in bitter mockery that we shall do better next time! Yes! Next time—next time—and then next time—and then hell!

**761. Decision to "Go."**

OH! if every man would only "go," the world would be the better for it. But so many of us have clear conceptions, just ideas, high sentiments, right principles, but we want that peculiar something which I cannot better describe than by the expression "decision to go." We are not to ask if anybody else is going; we are to go ourselves. You are not to say, "I am waiting till my companion is ready to move, and then I shall be forthcoming;" every man must go on his own account, his own errand, and according to his own conviction.

**762. Righteousness Vindicated.**

RIGHTEOUSNESS must be vindicated, and then grace becomes sure. Righteousness must be satisfied, and then eternity becomes heaven! The law must be made honourable, then the Gospel will be given to us, with the assurance of eternal permanence,—but not without.

**763. Go to the Fountain-head.**

Go to the fountain-head, dear sir; take what you can of the advantages of an intermediate ministry; hear godly men of every denomination and every type of intellect and method of speech; go all over your city hearing the preachers and teachers of Christian truth, and be thankful if any man can utter a tone that touches your heart, or gives one gleam of light that penetrates the darkness of your understanding. But don't forget the fountain-head! Talk an hour with

the servant; but spend your lifetime with the Master. Have a passing interview with His agents; but when He throws open His door and says, "Come now; I am ready; I wait to be gracious;" go to His feet and talk the case out.

#### 764. **Marriage.**

I NEED not say that much of the happiness of human life depends upon the marriage unions which are formed. It is one thing to view the subject of marriage in the light of passion or convenience, and another to regard it as an institution by which human life may be developed and trained to the highest uses and enjoyments. I do not hesitate to lay down the broad principle that where there is incongruity of religious conviction between man and woman, happiness of the deepest and purest kind is entirely out of the question. This principle is impartial in its application, having equal reference to the woman as to the man, and to the man as to the woman. Take the case of a young woman who has deep religious convictions and sympathies: she has been trained under religious influences, her habits have been identified with the sanctuary from very early life: she has taught in the school, she has served in connection with many agencies of the Church, and altogether her name has become honourably associated with benevolent operations; she is sought in marriage by a young man who has no religious convictions or sympathies, who, in fact, is worldly-minded, grovelling, earthly; he may, indeed, be a man of education, of literary refinement, of good social position, of captivating address; nay, more—I will go further, and say, he may be a man against whom society is unable justly to point the finger of reproach. Wherever he is known he is respected for many social excellencies. Viewed in a strictly worldly sense, the young man may be pronounced an eligible candidate for the lady's hand, yet, in the presence of such conditions, I have distinctly to give it as my opinion that happiness of the highest kind is impossible in such a connection. There must, on the woman's part, be more or less of sacrifice of the convictions and

sympathies which have distinguished her whole life. Her religious emphasis will be modified; more or less of a chill will subdue her Christian zeal; her works of benevolence will be in some degree impaired; there may not be any great outward difference in her manner, but her soul must have felt the desolation of an impoverishing influence.

#### 765. The Devil in Disguise.

THE devil can come to a man in many disguises. He does not always come, so to speak, as the devil pure and simple, but often brings with him a robe of light, and adapts himself to the condition, pursuits, and tastes of his intended victim.

#### 766. Elementary Morality.

"A TOOTH for a tooth and an eye for an eye." That is the law of nature; that is elementary morality. It is not vengeance, it is not resentment; it is alphabetic justice—justice at its lowest point—incipient righteousness. It is not two eyes for an eye, two teeth for a tooth; but an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a blow for a blow, a pit for a pit, selling for selling, and so on. A great many men are perfectly content with elementary morality, and alphabetic justice. People don't educate themselves from this kind of righteousness into Christian nobility of disposition. It is not a question of education; it is a question of sanctification.

#### 767. Conscience v. Love.

CONSCIENCE may tell a man what to do, but by an almost omnipotent constraint love makes him do it. You will find love at the pool-side, offering to help the poorest sufferer step into the healing water; and long after conscience is satisfied love will add something to a day's work, which has far exceeded the twelve hours of the hireling. Oh! those wretched calculating hirelings, who pinch their work up to the point of dishonesty! The men who make nothing

but technical rules cannot be honest out-and-out ; and they will never make life very successful.

#### 768. Cheating Conscience.

THE left hand can cheat the right. Even conscience itself can be put to sleep, and forced to fraudulent endorsements, while the spell of slumber is unbroken. A terrible danger is this, namely, that a man may be going east and west at the same time ! It is possible for a man's heart to be divided against itself, for a man to be living two lives, for a man to be promising himself things that are most heavenly, while at the same time he is kneeling with constant devotion before the altar that is inscribed to the devil. When will men be honest to themselves ? When will men dare to go into their very innermost hearts, and look at themselves in all candour and faithfulness ? Men are wicked when they have to hush the Divine voice that is within them ; men are in danger of committing the unpardonable sin when they quench the spirit that God has put within them for the interpretation of duty and the demand of right.

#### 769. Vindicating Sin.

HAVE you ever attempted to write out a vindication of any one sin you have ever committed ? Take your white card, write at the top of it the sin you propose to commit, whatever it be ; shut yourself up in solitude, write in some characters that nobody but yourself can decipher, and put down under your sin the reasons why you propose to commit it ; and put down every possible excuse you can. Reason yourself into it, and you will fail to do so if you be just to the first principles of human understanding and to the first elements of common sense. And God asks you to do this ; to reason the case out. He will not allow us to live our life in a passion, in a thoughtless hurry, to do things in a confused and hasty manner. He imposes upon us this simple obligation : " Stand still ; think about it ; reason it

out ; see what you mean ; and do not do it till you know the whole scope and consequences of the act."

**770. Conscience v. Love.**

THE philanthropy of morality goes at the bidding of conscience, but the philanthropy of the Cross goes at the bidding of love. You know the difference of the two biddings ? Conscience never yet developed a grand nature ; it has striven with much urgent importunity and many a pricking smart to keep men erect and honest, but it has never wrought in them any overflow of good nature, and fruitfulness of generous service. Christianity never lulls the conscience, yet never seems to expect much from it ; its chief hope is in Christianized human love. Conscience has but a limited sway ; love has empire over the whole man. Conscience will use its plumb and square, and with sharp-pointed compasses will describe the range of duty, but love will wreath every straight line with flowers, and to the majesty of rectitude will add all the graces and delights of beauty. Conscience is as the watchman who travels round his beat at night time ; enough for him that gates and doors are closed, and that bolts and bars are all in their places ; but love is as the friend who watches by the sleepless pillow of sickness, and with many a kind touch smooths the hard way of the sufferer.

**771. God Behind the Universe.**

How little we can do against the universe ! Surely, if any power short of Omnipotence had built creation, we should have had some power to injure it. Yet we cannot touch a single pulley, or wheel, or little hinge in the great machine. Men go with their iron tools, and with their gunpowder, and begin to penetrate the rocks, and to fill those rocks with inflammable substances ; they set fire to these substances, and there is a great noise and a loud explosion. But have they touched the earth—the earth as a whole—the earth in its astronomical relations ? Have they broken

her heart? Have they stirred one single stone in her foundations? No. The earth rolls round on her axis, and pursues, without a flutter, her silent journey round the sun. They have no power against her. But they have torn her, set fire to her, and exhausted their power upon her. And so with all the other creation. I cannot touch the very least star. I have no power to say to the comet, "Go back." I can stand upon the sea-shore, and say to the advancing water, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;" but the waves come and wash me back, and say, "Away! who art thou? we know not thy voice," and my footprints are washed out by the sea, that does not know me, that does not heed my power, that mocks my mandate. There must, therefore, be something greater than ourselves behind it all; or we could now and then get hold of it, and overbalance it, or pull it to pieces, or do something that would show the greatness of our strength.

#### 772. The Preventive Ministries.

THE preventive ministries of life are not, indeed, so heroic and impressive in their aspects as ministries of a more affirmative kind, yet are they set down in the book of God as most acceptable services. If you prevent your boy from becoming a drunkard, it is better than if you were to save him from the extremest dissipation, though it will not carry with it so imposing an appearance before the eyes of society.

#### 773. God—the Key to the World's Mystery.

GIVEN, human society as it is, *without faith in God*, and human society becomes a blunder, and every day becomes a mistake in the history of things. But, given society as it is, and creation as it is, *with God on the throne*—I say there are many things I cannot explain, there are many things I cannot over-reach, many spaces in which I have no influence at all—but I believe that God will bring out His good purposes at last, so as to show that under all confusion, and disturbance, and distress, and sorrow, there has been a

beneficent will working, and that what we called confusion is but another phase of order.

**774. Parity of Reasoning.**

THE amiable man who starved the minister because he was not a mathematician as well as a preacher, has given away his watch because it was not a piano as well as a time-keeper. He sees, too late, the troubles of logic.

**775. Money—a helpless God.**

SOME people have made money their god, and there is not a more helpless god in all the temples of idolatry. Cry aloud, for he is a god! he is talking or walking, hunting or sleeping, pursuing or driving, or anything you please. He will never come to you in the crisis of your life. He will make little compromises with you, help you over divers stiles, solve certain little problems for you. But when your soul is in agony, when your life has wrought itself down to the one last spasm, he will be a dumb god. Having hands, he will not help; having eyes, he will not see; having ears, he will not hear. Who was it? It was certainly not a beggar in the streets,—it was some royal great one who cried, “Millions of money for an inch of time!” There was an offer! Why, it might have altered the pulse of the money market if the thing had been feasible—it might have changed the vein of financial affairs for the time being. An inch of time—millions of money! And the bargain could not be struck.

**776. The Firmaments Beyond.**

As you look up to what you call especially our own firmament—the firmament whose great dim glory lies more or less within the vision of the naked eye—the astronomer says, “In that great arch how many suns do you find?” “One.” “Look again.” “How many,” we inquire in return, “have you found?” “What say you to a thousand?” “You have not found so many?” “Multiply it



by ten, and multiply that by ten more, and multiply that again. We have found in your firmament eighteen million suns!" "And is there no other firmament?" "Yes. This telescope has searched the heavens, and found another firmament above yours, and another higher, and another again, gallery upon gallery,—four thousand such firmaments arching over one another in ever-widening expanses!" Look at them, and cease your infidel babble! Measure them, and learn how poor a speck is the dust of man! Go to Christ, and hear what He says about them. The infidel, looking up there, says, "They came there by chance; they mean nothing; you see them all now that you look at them from the outside; it is a glittering nothing, and that's all." Jesus looks upon the blazing pomp, and turning to His poor one, He says, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you." I prefer to believe the Saviour. The other theory insults my reason, makes a fool of me. Jesus Christ comes to me with poetry, which instantly becomes faith, and which is the truest reality of hope.

#### **777. Gray-haired Christians.**

**MEN** have a right to look to gray-haired Christians for illustrations of the tendency of Christianity. Are you sullen, crabbed, impracticable? Are you self-involved, peevish, ungrateful? Or are you sunny, thankful, kind? These inquiries show how possible it is to hinder or help the Christian cause by the spirit in which we receive the intimations of our declining time upon the earth. The gray-haired Christian should be a tower of strength to the Christian cause. No beauty should exceed the beauty of his charitableness and hopefulness. See your calling, ye veteran saints, and be young in heart evermore!

#### **778. Grace—of the Cross, not of Nature.**

**NATURE** itself, brilliant and tuneful, is but a mocking mystery apart from the Cross—it is a lustrous grave, a

prison under the name of a palace, a land of captivity and sorrow. Souls are not saved by studying the works of nature. Astronomy and geology, botany and chemistry, have no redeeming message for hearts burdened with a sense of guilt; we must go further and go deeper, a cry must be sent up to the dwelling-place of the Most High. O God, save us! O God, be merciful unto us! O God, redeem us from the slavery and torment of sin! And whilst we are yet speaking, a voice addresses the anxious heart—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." *That* is what we want! *That* is sweet as morning light to men who have long sat in great darkness, and precious as the voice of the Deliverer to bondsmen who have desired to die.

#### 779. The Preventive Side of Providence.

Is He not ever working for us in ways that we know not? We know the great fact of His mediation, but what do we know of the subtle variations of that great fact? its loving devices, its little side plans, its collateral and incidental service? We do not know all that *summer* does, how can we know all the doings of *God*? We know that summer brings light and heat and beauty; but what of the drooping hopes which it cheers, the lonely lives which it gladdens, the anxious hearts which it soothes, and the innumerable little ministries which it exercises in unexpected ways? So with God. We do not know the evils from which He *saves us by prevention*. The railway accident is reported: the *shipwreck* is published: the *explosion* is recorded in every journal: but what of the accidents, the shipwrecks, the explosions, the collisions, the disasters of all kinds by night and by day, which are *prevented*? Is not every respiration a narrow escape from death? Is not the heart surrounded by deadly dangers in every beat? All this is unknown to us, but is not the less surely under the gracious control of the Redeemer.

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**780. Experience—the True Basis of Judgment.**


MAN looketh on the outward appearance, and his judgments are false and often cruel; the Lord looketh upon the spirit, so that not a sigh is lost, nor a purpose undervalued. We do not know through what discipline men have passed, what secret troubles are making their hearts sad, or what early disadvantages crush their spirit. One man goes forward to fifty years of age with hardly a day's anxiety; another struggles to it through a succession of the most trying sorrows. We are not to regard both men as if they had passed through a common experience. God knows our advantages and disadvantages, and His judgment is the result of His omniscience.

**781. Life-building.**

YOUNG men should strive less after ornament than depth of character. They must do the rough work of digging before they attempt the decorative work of papering and painting. If you are going to build a house, you don't begin with the painter and gilder. Alas! in building a life, many youths are content to dispense with the work that gives stability and duration. A pasteboard hut will do—yes, do, until it is borne off by the mocking winds, never to be seen again. I don't count your virtues by your buttons. Some men are all coat and no character: others read no book but the looking-glass: others mistake the mystery of an echo for the originality of a voice.

**782. The Harmony of Christ's Life and Death.**

THE method of Christ's leaving the world is consistent with His method of living in the world. The cross is a wonderful counterpart of the manger. There were no violent discrepancies in the life; only once, and that on the top of a mountain, did the Godhead visibly burn in the poor shrine of His flesh,—a sight which Moses had seen prefigured at Horeb. From beginning to end there was one line of



humiliation. The child of the manger is the man of the cross; the youth who was about His Father's business in the Temple was doing His Father's will on Calvary. There were other plans of leaving the world than that of crucifixion. Why not go up into the skies at midday, amid a great lustre, welcomed by the voices of angels and the peal of trumpets? Why not make a great demonstration of power rather than a saddening spectacle of weakness? Think of what might have been done! Yet he was numbered with the transgressors; His name was pronounced as a felon's; and even they who knew Him best left Him as if He had wronged their souls. The very method of departure is fraught with deep significance. The suffering itself must have had a meaning. When He could have taken the wings of the morning, or called around Him the angels that excel in strength, or gone up from Calvary as He ascended from Olivet, and yet became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, the very manner of the dying must have interpretations which separate it from all other deaths.

### 783. Self-sufficiency.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY on the part of man is an offence to God; not only so, it is a vexation to man himself. All efforts at completeness and independence of strength end in mortification. Towards one another we are to be self-reliant; towards God we are to be humble, dependent, all-trustful. How infinite is our folly in seeking to remove, by our own power, the mountains and hills that bar our way!

### 784. "Ungracious Welcomes."

THE devil gives ungracious welcome to every child that carries the faintest sign of moral nobility or special destiny. Moses was laid upon the river; the Lamb was pursued by the sword of Herod. It was a hard beginning, but the world has had history enough now to know that hard be-

ginnings are the winters out of which spring is quickened, and by which summer is enriched and glorified.

**785. Troubles the Source of Joy.**

IF troubles come upon a man as he is going along the path of duty, righteousness, and Divine conviction, if troubles come unexpectedly upon him without his being consciously the cause or occasion of them in any culpable degree, then these are the shadows out of which God will speak to him; these are the fires out of which man will hear the voice of benediction; these are the troubles that shall be turned into joy. I would discriminate distinctly between the man who is always pulling the house of his life about his own ears, who is never at rest except when he is pulling something to pieces and doing mischief, and the man who, having God's law in him, is striving to live according to its rhythm, and to exemplify its virtue. The one man shall have trouble upon trouble; the other, too, shall have trouble upon trouble, but his accumulating troubles shall become sources and fountains of joy.

**786. Aspects of God's Character.**

GOD is not to be described in parts; He is to be comprehended in the unity of His character. A child describing the lightning might say, "It was beautiful, so bright, and swifter than any flying bird, and so quiet that I could not hear it as it passed through the air;" this would be true. A tree might say, "It was awful, it tore off branches that had been growing for a hundred years, it rent me in twain down to the very root, and no summer can ever recover me—I am left here to die;" this also would be true. So with Almighty God: He is terrible in power, making nothing of all that man counts strong, yet He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

**787. No Excuse for Sin.**

IF you mean by excuses that you can trifle, that you can state a case that has no moral substance in it, I believe you.

If you say that you can gloss over your actions, put a little gilding upon the outside of your behaviour, so as to make it look tolerably well, I say, "I agree with you." But if you say that you can reason out your case, if you have done one bad action in your life, you are stating what you know to be untrue. What! can you defend a bad action? What a wicked genius must be yours! If you ever pressed your finger too heavily upon man, woman, or child who was weak and self-helpless, all your wit and genius and sagacity would be used in vain, if you attempted to defend the action on moral principles. I charge you with this.

#### 788. Sincerity.

THERE is a sincerity of fanaticism, as well as a sincerity of philosophy. There is a sincerity of ignorance, as well as a sincerity of knowledge.

#### 789. Moral Promises.

THE greatest promises are moral promises, and I care not how much paper a man may sign; if his heart is wrong, he will swear away his own signature. Yes, if he has not signed with his heart, it is of poor account that he has signed with his hand. He can look at his signature and say it is his, and then work as if he had never written one single letter of it. It is God's *heart* that comes down with His signature. He has never dealt with us only by His hand. His hand has been the servant of His heart; because of His *moral* attributes all that He has promised shall be fulfilled to the letter. No, no, not fulfilled to the *letter*. What *letter* can hold God? The letter is only as the little river-bank, the great waters of His love will overflow all the limitations of the most ambitious letter. God cannot be known by letters. They are but as the hem of His garment, they lie a long way from His soul.

#### 790. How to Build up Character.

IN building character, men are to be at least as forethoughtful and sagacious as in building their houses of stone. How do

- you conduct your arrangements in building a house? Suppose that it were possible for a man never to have seen any season but summer, and suppose such a man called upon to advise in the erection of a building: you can imagine his procedure; everything is to be light, because he never heard a high wind; water-pipes may be exposed, for he never felt the severity of frost; the most flimsy roof will be sufficient, for he knows nothing of the great rains of winter and spring. Tell such a man that the winds will become stormy, that the rivers will be chilled into ice, that his windows will be blinded with snow, and that floods will beat upon his roof, and if he is a wise man he will say, "I must not build for one season, but for all seasons; I must not build for fine days, but for days that will be tempestuous; I must, as far as possible, prepare for the most inclement and trying weather." That is simple common sense. Now, why be less sensible in building a character than in building a house? We build our bricks for severity as well as for sunshine, why build our characters with less care? If in summer we think about the frost, why not in prosperity have some thought for adversity? If in July we prepare for December, why not in the flattering hour of exultation think of the judgment that is at once infallible and irresistible? As he would be infinitely foolish who should build his house without thinking of the natural forces that will try its strength, so is he cursed with insanity who builds his character without thinking of the fire with which God will try every man's work of what sort it is.

#### 791. Complete Sanctification.

THE work of sanctification must go on until the saint can say, "I and my Father are one." That is the sublime end of Christianity. It is not to multiply theological technicalities; it is not to build one church spire higher than another; it is not to furnish a grindstone on which pugnacious bigots may whet their little swords; it is to gather up a shattered and overthrown humanity, to re-burnish the living stones on which the fire of an enemy has left traces

of fury, to rebuild the fallen empire of manhood, until it shall be beautiful and holy as a palace built for God.

**792. The Fatherhood of God.**

ALL earthly parentage is but a reflection of God's fatherly relation to mankind; and if we have idolized and abused that which is merely secondary and typical, we need such calls as will remind us that over all there reigns, in gracious majesty and tender righteousness, the Maker, the Sovereign, and the Redeemer of our lives.

**793. "The Fountain-head."**

THE sinner is invited to take his case to the fountain-head. Do not many persons stumble and err at this very point by a misunderstanding of the terms of the proposition? If I take my evil heart to a human teacher, he can do but little for me except as an instrument. I must hear his ministry, but I must regard him as the echo and not the voice, the second and not the principal, the instrument and not the revealer. If I take my case to a priest, named by the highest names, still I have done what I ought not to have done if I make that the final point instead of a temporary resting-place. It is *God* who invites us to state the case directly to Himself.

**794. Human Insufficiency.**

CONSCIENCE, when not perverted, will tell a man this: *That he cannot make himself really good.* He may attempt to do so, but every attempt he makes will but aggravate his torment. He may endeavour to cleanse his heart and to purify his life, but he will come back saying, "It is impossible to take out the deepest stain of my heart. I have made efforts, I have appointed hours of penance, I have undergone certain self-control, and self-discipline, and self-chastisement—call it what you please—I have said I shall stand here and sit there, until I have myself under perfect control, and when I have done it all, there has been an



aching in my heart, a conviction that I could not silence, a charge I could not quash; what I have done has been but an exhibition of vanity, an abortive attempt to do something in my own strength, which I really had no strength to accomplish.

#### 795. The Eternal One a Guest.

WHO receives the Eternal One as guest and friend? Name him. Hast thou heard his name? Tell it. His name is *a broken-hearted man!* God guests with the contrite and companies with the self-renouncing soul.

#### 796. No Peace to the Wicked.

THERE can be no peace where there is no righteousness,—we have come to feel how necessarily and profoundly true it is that there is no peace to the *wicked*. The wicked man has fallen out of the planetary system of the moral universe; he is a wandering star; he staggers in his erratic course; he knows not the mystery of the simple and sublime motion which finally expresses itself in perfect rest.

#### 797. Studying Men.

“So I am in all the blessed region of reason; but if a wolf were to appear in my room, I should treat him as a wolf. I am not to be duped by shapes and attitudes. You will say that a man is not a wolf; I answer, “A man may be wolfish, he may be fierce, he may be without mercy; am I merely to count his legs, and say that he is not a wolf because he is not a quadruped? The reasoning would be unsound. Some men are foxes, some are lions, some are serpents, some are geese, some are eagles, and some are asses. I believe that in every man there is an element of some member or other of the lower animal kingdom. It may be an element of the beautiful bird province, or it may be an element of the cruelty that is found in beasts of prey. Herod was a fox,—many of the Jews were vipers. You must find out the animal stratum that is in every man, and

you must approach him accordingly : you must not count his feet, you must analyze his blood."

#### 798. Ignorance *v.* Culture.

MIRACLES can be difficult of credence only according to the low spiritual altitude from which they are viewed. As wonder is a sign of ignorance, so unbelief is a sign of incompleteness. The unlettered man is amazed at language which to the learned man is perfectly simple, just because the learned man has conquered himself by bringing his powers under adequate discipline, whereas the untaught man is ruled by his own ignorance. The novice, in anything, is necessarily impressed with the difficulty of a great work, whereas the adept has overcome all the disturbing sensations which inevitably accompany inexperience. The novice invariably first sees the difficulty ; he is conscious of a disparity between the forces at his command and the result to be attained, and soon augments difficulty into impossibility. The man of diminutive faith, a man in whom the self-element is uppermost, is astounded at the miracles of Jesus Christ ; while the man of large faith, in whom the self-element is subordinated, accepts them with composure.

#### 799. A Father's Mercy sought in vain.

SHALL I tell you of a minister who loudly preached the law, and sternly pronounced the judgment of the Lord against what he considered every form of evil ? He had a beautiful daughter, who was lured into forbidden ways. A more simple-minded, trustful child never blest the fire-side of any home. But she was led away. Not all at once, indeed, did she take the great leap into the terrible darkness ; she traversed a gently-inclined plane. Could she have spoken freely to her father, she would never have gone so far ; but when she did speak to him, he received her at the point of the cold, sharp sword of the law. He did not understand her tears. He knew not that righteousness must be merciful if it would be complete. He

was stern, hard, upright—a man who weighed and measured everything by law, and turned the Gospel itself into redemption by arithmetic. His child left him. She soon felt the cold and the darkness, the bitter hunger and the sharp pain of those who are the servants of sin. In much suffering—such suffering as tears the heart in secret, and goads the brain to madness—she turned her steps towards her father's house, and asked me on the way to plead for her. I cannot forget her woe-worn face; there were great red rings round her beautiful eyes—the eyes which should have been full of light, of young hope, and girlish merriment. She was old too soon; she had drunk of the cup of which if any woman drink, she can never be young again. She came to me. The night was darkened by great rains, which fell through a keen north wind, and yet she had but little on to keep out the sharpness of the harsh night. She stammered out that she was tired and sad and penitent; and that she longed to tell her father so, and die in her mother's chair. I hastened to him—I never went so quickly anywhere in my life—to tell him that he might rise at once almost to heaven, for his child, so long lost, was at the door.

"I cannot see her, sir; no wicked person shall dwell in my sight."

"But she's penitent."

"She must *prove* that before I can receive her."

"Sir! do you talk so about your poor, weary, jaded child? See her but for a moment, and you will pity her misery."

"Sir," said he, in a hard, legal tone, "the way of transgressors is hard."

"Sir," said I, "I'm *ashamed* of you. Such hearts as yours never knew the Gospel of Jesus Christ; you were never in Gethsemane,—you were never in Calvary. Your poor, wronged, sinning, broken-hearted child will be in heaven, upon the breast of the living God, and you yourself will be justly thrust down to hell!"

"Not every one that SAITH unto me, Lord, Lord, shall

enter the kingdom of heaven." *This* man was saying, "Lord, Lord," in every sermon he preached, every prayer he offered; but when his own poor child came to the door he stiffened himself, and became not merely unchristian, but diabolical!

#### 800. *Man's Nature asserting Itself.*

How truly and powerfully a man's nature may assert itself, and claim its due, even in the face of the most unfavourable circumstances. Here was a man in a garret, and that garret in one of the most uninviting courts in the city of London, without any background of polished mahogany, glittering mirrors, and costly pictures; yet he proved himself a gentleman. Some of us require all the help that the cabinet-maker and the artist can give us, but this man shone through his poverty as the sun shines through a lowering cloud. All things look well in summer, do they not? Even common posts and decaying walls? Even fallen trees and flowering weeds? It was so in the presence of this summer-like old man; there was nothing in his garret that was not brightened by the subtle light which found its way from his radiant countenance.

#### 801. *The Old Age of Piety.*

GIVE God your best strength, the bloom of your power, the pride of your life, and when you are old and gray-headed He will forsake you not. Blessed are they who have lived in the way of godliness even unto old age. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."

"Our dear old Grandpa is seventy;  
Our Lulu is only seven;  
But the hoary saint and the blooming child  
Have treasures up in heaven.

Grandpapa's hand is brawny,  
Lulu's dainty and small;  
But the bountiful hands of seventy and seven  
Reach freely forth to all.

Grandpapa neareth the portal  
 Ending life's weary way :  
 But Lulu seeth the end afar,  
 A glimmer of golden day.

Grandpapa loveth the God-Man,  
 Claspeth ever His hand ;  
 And Lulu loveth the Christ-Child,  
 The joy of her ' Happy Land.'

Together dear Grandpa and Lulu—  
 White hair and golden head—  
 Have knelt at the holy altar to-day,  
 And taken the wine and bread.

And my soul breathes blessings on them—  
 Pure heart, or great or small,  
 To the heavenly fold of the young and old,  
 God guide and welcome all."

### 802. Arguing v. Preaching.

THE sun does not say that he will not bring summer upon the earth until all weeds are pulled up ; he brings in summer, notwithstanding the weeds. Our first work is not argument against error, but the preaching of affirmative doctrine.

### 803. Condition of Society learned from Individual Men.

IT is from *individual men* that we learn the true condition of the society which lies beyond us. If we look only within our own narrow circle, we may suppose that things are tolerably orderly and satisfactory. But, listen ! The voice of one who is in distress reaches us ! He is only one, that is true ; but from him, though lonely, we may learn that beyond the sunny circle of our own comfort there is a dark rim of wicked conspiracy against all rights and joys. Think, that around British society to-day there is a huge circle of enemies, conspirators, spoilers,—prisons, magistracies, restrictions, and penal ministries ! There is a boundary, beyond which if a man step he will pass into the most aggravated form of barbarism !

**804. God's Word in Man's Heart.**

GOD puts a word into a man's heart to-day, and that word sings to him, speaks comfortably to him, he falls again and again upon that word. When things are apparently against him he says, "Yes, but did not God say so and so?" and that word is to him as a nightingale in the darkness of his night-life. O never did bird sing so sweetly, so lusciously, so tunefully, so hopefully! And God is always carrying His word forward to incarnation, and many a Bethlehem He has on the long road of the future.

**805. Meaning of Words.**

How many are the mistakes popularly made respecting the word *Rich*. The labourer who earns but a few shillings a week would consider himself rich if those few shillings were doubled. Propose to the lord whose soil he cultivates that he should accept the sum which the labourer regards as equivalent to wealth, and he will instantly tell you that you wish to make a beggar of him. What is wealth to the one man is beggary to the other! So true is it, that no dictionary can give you the meaning of words. Every man must interpret his own terms. There is a wealth that is material, there is a wealth also that is spiritual. He is wealthy who has the noblest ideas and the highest aspirations. There is a church mentioned in the New Testament which said, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing;" but the Divine voice replied, "Thou knowest not that thou art poor, and blind, and miserable, and naked." So much for two views of the same case.

**806. Discussing God Piecemeal.**

I NEVER could read your theological books. I have just been in London, and a fine fellow there was kind enough to put some theological works into my hands, supposing, no doubt, that they were suited to my state of mind; but—"pshaw!"

"And pray what was the matter with the theological books, Mr Digby?"

"They wanted to measure God for a livery——"

"Mr Digby!" Mr Lambert exclaimed, with strong deprecation.

"Well, then, they wanted to put God through a mould——"

"Most extraordinary language!"

"Well, then, let me say that they wanted to take Him to pieces like a piece of machinery——"

Mr Lambert groaned.

"One writer—he must have had a clay heart as well as a clay head—actually began to discuss God piecemeal: first of all, he had a chapter about His power, then one about His wisdom, then another upon His goodness, and so on, and so on. The learned ass!"

### 807. God must do Right

HERE we open the Bible, in which we find that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required, and that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for nations which enjoyed a fuller revelation of Divine purpose and requirements. The heathen are a law unto themselves. Five talents are expected to produce more than two. The Divine plan of judgment therefore is not arbitrary, but moral. If we lose hold of this principle, we shall see confusion where we might see the order of righteousness. First of all, and last of all, it must be our settled and unalterable conviction that *God must do right*, or He is no longer God. Everything must perish which opposes this law. We are not, however, to look at incomplete cases, and regard them as final criteria by which to test the wisdom and righteousness of the Almighty. In many cases we shall have to repress our impatience, and calmly to wait until fuller light is granted.

### 808. The Cross.

THERE can be no mistake. Jesus Christ promises no bed of roses, no violet-scented paths. He did not say, "Let us

walk upon the velvet moss"; He did not say, "Let us walk by the still waters, let us drink of the nectar of the gods." He said, "Cross! Lose your life!" So if any man has entered upon the Christian course with the idea that he is now to have rest and entire sweetness, exemption from suffering and temptation and loss, he has entered upon a Christian course under the profoundest mistake he could possibly commit, and in defiance of the most express language which Jesus Christ the Son of God could use. See the picture! It is a glorious scene. At the head yonder of a great procession is the Son of God. On His shoulder is a gigantic cross. He bears it as He might bear the burden of the universe. Behind Him, moving on in rank after rank, is a great army, not to be numbered by the arithmetic of men. And each believer is carrying upon his own shoulder his own cross. It is a procession of cross-bearers. Jesus said, "I go to suffer and be killed, and be raised again; if any man will come after Me let him take up his cross and follow Me." Are we cross-bearers? No. Then we are not Christ-followers. Have we in us the spirit of self-crucifixion? Yes. Then we have drunk deeply into the spirit of Jesus.

#### 809. To the Law and the Testimony.

YOUNG friend and fellow-student of mine, come much to the book, to Jesus Christ's own words, to the New Testament. Read what He says. I tell you with a full heart that His dear words re-convert me every time I read them. There is some new meaning in His word whenever I pronounce it. After an hour's study upon a sentence I think I have got all the meaning out of it. I shut the book and muse upon it. I open at the same place the next day, and behold there is a new heaven, a new sun, new stars, new rainbows, new glories. "He fainteth not, neither is weary." I wish you to begin, and I would to God we could all begin, to study the words of Jesus Christ themselves; to get what help we can from wise teachers and honest friends, but to come again and again to the words of



Holy Scripture. We have nothing to do with controversies, and with sects, and with contending opinions. We must come to this Speaker who has said to us, "I am the Christ, the Son of the living God."

#### 810. Religious Conviction.

THERE is everything in deep and intelligent religious conviction to evoke the latent energies of the spiritual nature; it carries the spirit from particulars to universals, from detailed accidents to fundamental principles, it transfigures all outward nature into a splendid symbol of God, it overpasses the narrow limits of time and draws lessons from eternity, it pours a gladdening light upon the darkness of the grave, it promises magnificent possibilities of service in the endless day of the better world. Such conviction never calls any man downward, never gives him a degrading view of human nature, never vexes the soul with reproaches about its littleness, but ever teaches that so long as the soul grows according to God's law, it moves towards "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

#### 811. Vision of Faith.

THERE is another vision beside the vision of the body; faith itself is sight; and where faith is complete, there is a consciousness of God's presence throughout our life and service which amounts to a distinct vision of God's personal presence and government.

#### 812. Childlikeness.

THE disciples measured themselves by their manliness: Jesus taught them to measure themselves by their *childlikeness*.

#### 813. The God of Order.

LEARN from the peace and order, and rhythm and harmony of the great heavens how peaceful God would make our

human life and our social affairs. God is the God of order and not of confusion ; one thing is wanted to the completeness of our order, and that is our heart's consent.

#### 814. Divisions of the Church.

MY heart is full of pain when thinking of the delusions, the ignorance, the indifference, which are to be found in the so-called Church of Christ. Judgment must begin at the house of God. Amongst the profoundest and saddest convictions which govern me is the assurance that were Christ to appear amongst us, as He appeared in Judea, He would turn most of us out of His Church, and put to silence many who speak most confidently in His name. I am afflicted when I think of this. We have Christianity without Christ. We have controversy without charity. We have form without power. We are the proud Pharisees of the day. We have dwarfed the infinite grace of Christ into observances and technicalities, and have argued and contended and clamoured, until the dear sad Cross of the Son of God has lost the inscription of redeeming love, and become disfigured by the contradictions and profanities of self-constituted and self-satisfied sects.

#### 815. Ability of God.

IF He can sustain that firmament of worlds, can He not sustain our little life? Can He who numbers the stars not also number the hairs of our head? Is our *house* greater than God's *heavens*, that He cannot be trusted with it? "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Does His work in the starry creation ever fail? Does the starlight waste because of the insufficiency of God's glory? O Thou who carriest the worlds in Thine hands, carry, too, my poor life!

#### 816. Unanimity of Bad Men (?)

How little unity there is in wickedness, what a very temporary thing is the supposed unanimity of bad men,—how

bad men will one day turn upon one another, and say, "It was you!" Ha! such is the unanimity of wicked conspirators! "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not;" they will turn against thee some day. Though your swords be pointed against one man at the present hour, and you may be unanimous in some wicked deed,—God's great wheel is going round and round, and the hour cometh when the men who urged thee to do the evil deed and share with them their unholy counsels, will seek thy heart, will accuse thee, will charge thee with participation in their nefarious, hellish designs and work.

### 817. Strangeness of God's Choice.

How God could have chosen such a man as Jacob for any special purpose of honour, to set him at the head of a nation, and give him a name above all kings, has puzzled many a reader. The lot has always fallen upon Esau, yet God chose Jacob for His special blessing. How is this? We can never find out, if we look at this case alone; but if we take a wide view of human history we shall discover that God has always chosen the weak and the lost as instruments of blessing in His wondrous ministry. He has never taken what would be generally considered the best specimens of humanity; He has often set the younger before the elder, He has left the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, and gone after one that was lost; He has passed by Jerusalem, and set His love upon Nazareth; and when He elected a rock for His Church, it was not John, but Peter, to whom the revelation was made. All this is strange, and yet it is clearly God's method; and surely we may see the germ of the redemptive idea in this habit of working. If God had begun anywhere but at the very lowest depth, His work would have been incomplete; it would have been a kind of work which any man would have attempted; but to begin with the worst, to set Jacob above Esau, to prefer Peter to John, to select the bruised reed rather than the great strong tree, was to adopt a method which never could have been conceived but by infinite wisdom and love.

**818. Clean!**

TAKE the word *Clean*. There is not a child in the school who supposes himself ignorant of the meaning of this word. There is not a servant in your house who would not smile on being asked to define so simple a word. Yet are we sure that we fully understand the term *clean* as it is found in the Bible? The word has a primary meaning and also a secondary meaning. When your servant hands you a glass which she has cleansed by every means in her power, she may insist upon it that the article is perfectly clean. You may tell her that the glass is not clean, and she will resent the statement. Yet you may both be right. The glass is as clean as the industry of the servant can possibly make it; but you are a chemist, and are speaking of a cleansing which does not lie within the region of her ideas or service. For domestic uses a vessel may be sparklingly clean, and yet for chemical purposes it may be pronounced thoroughly unclean. The chemist therefore has one definition and the housemaid another. What is true in science is still more profoundly true in morals. The Pharisee supposes himself to be clean, because he fasts, pays tithes, abstains from extortion or other crimes. His, however, is but an external cleanness; he mistakes a *relative* for a *primary* signification.

**819. A Cross for Every Man.**

THERE is no one common cross which every man is to carry; but each individual life has its own special trial, its own peculiar and incommunicable cross. I am not to carry your cross; you are not to carry mine. Sometimes I am unable to understand the particular difficulty which you have to contend with in life, because my trials do not lie in the same direction as yours. I may be covetous; you may be unable to understand that feeling in me, because you are generous. I may be generous and open-handed, and you may be covetous, and I cannot understand why any man should be covetous when I have no difficulty

in that direction myself. So with bad temper, so with sensual desires, so with worldly-mindedness, so with the spirit of criticism and controversy, and so with that inner hidden thing which gives individuality to each of us. Each must find out his own cross, each must bear that cross in the Saviour's name and strength for himself. And whenever there is a disposition to bear the cross there shall be ministered unto the cross-bearer sustaining grace and animating comfort from heaven.

### 820. The Right Side of the Ship.

HERE is a beautiful scene for us; let us dwell on the picture awhile. The disciples without their Master on yonder water fishing, fishing all night, taking nothing, the morning coming silently around them, and a figure on the shore, and to the disciples it was nothing but a figure, only a distant thing without special life, without peculiar significance, nothing to them but a figure;—and yet it was the Saviour. Is not that a very lovely, pathetic picture? Does it not touch the imagination and move the heart? Now we come from the picture to the interview opened by these words, "Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No." What did He say to them? He said what He always says, the directing word. Hear Him:—"Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." What does He know about it, standing on the land, a stranger, they fishermen by profession who have spent a life-time in this work? Who is He that He should know what to say to them in that hour? They did cast, "and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." Is there not a lesson here for all Christian workers? What is it? This prayer should never be absent from our lips, "Lord Jesus, thou knowest which is the right side of the ship in this business of mine, in these family concerns of mine, in this Christian ministry of mine, in this missionary work which I have undertaken. Blessed, gentle Christ, teach me how and where to cast the net." Brethren, go out fishing without Christ and you will have "night," and

"nothing;" work according to His counsel and the sea itself shall open its caverns and hiding-places, and riches and treasures—all things are yours when ye are Christ's.

**821. God's Withdrawment from Man.**

THINK of God sending a famine upon the soul,—of minds pining and dying because Divine messages have been withdrawn! We know what the effect would be if God were to withhold the dew, or to trouble the air with a plague, or to avert the beams of the sun; the garden would be a desert, the fruitful field a sandy plain, the wind a bearer of death, summer a stormy night, and life itself a cruel variation of death,—so penetrating, so boundless is the influence of God in nature. Is it conceivable that the withdrawal of God's influence would be less disastrous upon the spirit of man?

**822. Revival through Revolution.**

IF ever we are to have a *revival*, it must come through a *revolution*. The revival which begins and ends in mere emotion, must, by the very necessity of the case, do more harm than good. Feeling is not to be trifled with. Familiarity with tears leads to callousness. It is possible, however, to have a revival based on intelligence, and to experience the most poignant feeling as the result of intellectual and moral conviction.

**823. Raven Digby.**

"You knew his parents then?" "I knew them as friendless and breadless. The boy's mother had knowledge of the invisible, and she died, as she said, looking at bright angels. She had a tuneful tongue and a far-seeing eye. Poor woman! Her wings had been torn off, and the windows of her soul had been storm-blinded, yet were there Divine accents in her strange speech. Dear Raven begs me to tell him all I ever knew and saw of the woman, which was but little, after all. His father was but as

a beast of the wood : the light never got farther than his flesh. Raven, dear boy, would have me say whether his mother was beautiful, but I say to the child, What is beauty? To me the woman *was* beautiful, because of many broken utterances which had melody in them. Whilst her husband would look at a dog, she would look at a star as if she knew it, or had seen it from some other world."

**824. "Father on Deck."**

A VESSEL coming across the Atlantic was suddenly struck in the darkness of midnight by a terrible wind; she shivered and reeled under the stroke; in an instant all her passengers and crew were thrown into consternation and dismay; on every hand there were signs of confusion and alarm. In the midst of all, the captain's little girl awoke, and, raising herself, sweetly inquired, "Is father on deck?" and, on being hurriedly told that he was, the trustful little creature peacefully returned to her slumber and dreams. I would be as that little girl. Darkness and storm and loss will surely befall me, yet, amid the gloom and the floods and the ruin, I would ask, "Is Father on deck?" and, being assured that God was with me, I would rest in the peace of faith. Even the winds and the seas obey our Father's voice; the sea supports the steps of our Father when He comes to us in the night of tempest and sorrow; and when He is in the vessel, it is impossible to be overwhelmed.

**825. "The Light of the World."**

THE best philosophies of the ancient civilization descend so much into detail as to leave no scope for the play of life on the part of the reader. Everything is numbered, labelled, docketed,—there it is, take it, or be a fool. Plato was so voluminous in his details, going from statesmanship, philosophy, science, and rhetoric to early rising, hunting, dancing, money-lending, and Sicilian cookery, as to give one

the idea that he undertook to do the work of a domestic gasfitter rather than to bring men into the light of the sun. He is so minute as to place a lamp at the corner of every street, at the entrance of every house, and in every room of every habitation. He was a very skilful gasfitter, and very careful; he ran his trial-light over every tube and every tap, but it may be doubted whether, after all, he was more than a painstaking gasfitter,—a high character, too, considering the general darkness of his time. Now Christ, instead of intermeddling with artificial or secondary light, at once, with something more than “the authoritative tone and earnestness of a Jew,” announced himself as “the Light of the world,”—not Holman Hunt’s “Light of the World,” who resembles a belated and forlorn traveller carrying a lantern, but a man who had the light *in* him, and through whom it gleamed like the sun through a summer cloud. Plato lighted his age with gas, Christ lighted the world with the sun; the one was local, the other universal; the one changeable, the other permanent.

### 826. Nature is but the Outer Court.

It is not uncommon to hear men talking in some such words as—“When I worship I go out into the temple of nature: I uncover my head in the aisles of the forest: I hush myself under the minster roof of the stars: I listen to the psalm of the sea.” This kind of talk sounds as if it meant something. It touches one side of life; how far it touches the other remains to be seen. As *Christians* we claim to have sympathy with nature. From the rash talk of certain avowed lovers of nature it would seem that Christians, by reason of their Christianity, did not know the sea when they were looking at it, and that they required to have the sun pointed out with a rod before they could distinguish it from the moon. I love nature. I have seen some of her pictures, and heard many of her voices. She is always full of suggestion. When she clothes herself youthfully as in spring; when she blushes with all the hopes and sweet promises of summer; when



she sits in all the quiet matronliness of autumn ; when her hair is white with age in winter ; throughout the whole there is beauty. We know her riches—what diamonds sparkle in her crown ; what colours beautify her robe ; what an aureole encircles her majestic head. We know her well. We have drunk her dew in the morning, and owned that no chalice held wine so good. Again and again we have been blessed by her soothing ministry. But let me tell you something farther. I will be frank that you may understand me. Nature is to me often the saddest of all sights. She is but a succession of phases. I cannot keep her at any point. The spring dies ; the summer vanishes ; autumn delivers her gifts and turns away ; winter is a presence I would not detain ; the sun is but for an appointed time, and the stars withdraw long before I have half counted them. More than that. Nature is but an alphabet or, at most, a primer. I soon begin to find that she has no answer to my deepest wants, and that I can ask her questions which will stagger her with dismay. She pleases my intellect ; she amuses my fancy ; she piques my curiosity ; but in all her meads and groves she has no plant which can heal the fatal wound of my sin ! If I ask her for *mercy* I am as one that raves in madness ; if I ask her to find me a hiding-place from God she turns away as from an insult ! I am a sinner, and must find an answer to my sin. My heart aches, and I ask for a physician that can extract the pain. My conscience tortures me, and I cry for rest. Then I find the spiritual sanctuary ; I pass within the veil ; I see the Cross, the Priest, the Sacrifice, and ever after, nature is but an outer court, and grace is the presence-chamber of the Redeeming King.

### 827. A Diluted Morality.

A FARMER went to his landlord and said—knowing him to be a stingy, niggardly man, as all landlords are bound to be up to a given point—“Will you build me a stable ?” “Will I build you a stable ! No, nothing of the kind ;

can't think of such a thing." "Well," said the farmer, "will you put me up a gate in the far field?" "Oh, yes, yes; put up a gate—that's a different thing altogether." Now, the farmer in the first instance wanted no stable. It would have been an inconvenience to have had a stable; but he knew that if he had in the first instance made the request for the gate he would have received exactly the same response which was given about the stable. So when men say, "Let us slay our brother," there is a little shuddering in society. We don't want to slay our brother. "Well, then," says an acute man, "let us sell him." And instantly, amiable Christian people say, "Ay, ay, this is a very different thing; yes, let's sell him." Observe, the morality is not changed, only the point in the scale has been lowered. When God comes to judge He will not say, "Is this virtue and water? is this diluted vice?" But, "Is this right? is this wrong?" The standard of judgment will be the holiness of God.

### 828. Correctness of the Evangelic Story.

THE manner in which Christ's followers have reported Him is truly marvellous, a point which calls for serious thought on the part of all who wish to go carefully through the incidental and tributary evidence. In our own day it is so common to have reports of speeches, that we think little of them; though in many cases so wonderful, yet they have come to be regarded as matters of course. But the disciples were not shorthand writers; we do not find that one of them was elected clerk, and that in the evening of each day he made entries in a common journal which all could read and revise; yet they report His discourses often in the first person, and preserve all the sharpness and vivacity of dialogue, retort, extemporaneous definition, and appeal. We feel throughout that we are reading the words of a talker, not of an author; all the sharp edge of free speech is singularly preserved, so much so that with the least effort of imagination we can be present at the delivery of every discourse, or at every passage at arms, between Christ and

His opponents. A strange, yet pleasant, feeling of *nearness* to the event steals over every reader of the evangelic story; no lengthening shadows of distance diminish the reader's interest—everything is at hand!

### 829. Diversity.

LIFE is not to be judged by formal logic. Ask two travellers who have completed the same journey to describe the course they have taken, with all the incidents. They have traversed the same road, on the same day, under the same conditions; yet the statement of the one is meagre, the statement of the other minute. How so? They walked under the same light, and the great volume of the landscape lay open before them. The difference is in the mental habitudes of the observers. The eye of the one was trained: the eye of the other was uneducated. The same thing is illustrated in the reading of a book: one reader is instructed; another disappointed. And this diversity, when the spirit of censoriousness is excluded, is fruitful of good. It provokes to deeper and more continuous investigation; it saves the intellectual world from monotony, stagnation, and death; it creates a generous interest in the gifts of fellow-inquirers. There is even a higher benefit: it shows that no one man has all the truth; it breaks up monopoly, it destroys infallibility.

### 830. Power of Faith in Times of Sorrow.

You say, Here is a beautiful little bud, and it shall be nourished with light and with dew, and become the best flower in the garden; and God comes in at night, and nips it off, and in the morning we have tears and sorrow. We begin to build our pillar, and it is growing under our touch, and we say, This shall be a beautiful column, a noble pillar; it shall be capped in the most elaborate style of sculpture; and God takes us away just as we are putting on the head, and our purposes are broken off. And as for the author, poor man! just as he dips his pen to finish a sentence, God says, "That

will do ;” and He punctuates the paragraph with *Death*. That is a fact ; but this is what we are perplexed by, viz., when God takes away the little blushing bud, and breaks the column in twain, and arrests the hand of genius in its wondrous fabrications, and then says, It is expedient *for you* that it be so. And it is at this point that we either become strong men by the triumph of faith, or we succumb as the captives of unbelief.

### 831. Unprofitableness.

God cannot bear unprofitableness. There is no verse in the holy testimony that is in favour of unproductiveness. Is there a fig-tree there without fruit, disappointing the hunger of Christ ? It withers away under His frown ! Is there a man who, having advantages intrusted to him, has not made the most of them, has not used them,—has rather allowed them to fall into disuse and decay—God says, “He is an unprofitable servant, and he must go into outer darkness ; his example would corrupt the universe if I were to allow him to exist amongst other men who are industrious and faithful ; he might gradually chill the ardour of their love and impair the completeness of their integrity.”

### 832. The Preacher's Knowledge of Human Nature.

THE preacher's power must always be in the ratio of his knowledge of human nature. The more of *man* he has in him, the more he will command the attention and homage of men. He is but a learned fool, who knows everything but himself. His teaching will be confined to a few self-contained dogmas ; it will never give signs of that prophetic fire which shrines itself in poesy or parable.

### 833. Original Depravity.

MEN may come upon the doctrine of original depravity in one of two different ways ; for example, they may come upon it as a dogma in theology. The first thing that some theologians do is to assail human nature, to describe it as being

covered with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, and as deserving nothing but eternal burning. Human nature resists this as a slander: it says, "No; I have good impulses, upward desires, generous emotions towards my fellow-creatures; I resent your theological calumnies." So much for the first method of approaching the doctrine. The second is totally unlike it. A man, for example, heartily accepts Jesus Christ, studies Him with most passionate devotion, and grows daily more like Him, in all purity, gentleness, and self-oblivion. From this altitude he looks back upon his former self; he compares the human nature with which he started with the human nature he has attained, and involuntarily, by the sheer necessity of the contrast, he says, "I was born in sin, and shapen in iniquity." This conclusion he comes to, not by dogmatic teaching, but by dogmatic experience; what he never could have understood as an opinion he realizes as a fact.

#### 834. Living by Faith.

WE never live sublimely till we live in the poetry of faith, till our faith becomes music and victory. This is the picture of a day which has yet to dawn upon the world.

#### 835. Swallowed up in Victory.

I DREAM—far out on the waste of waters there moves a pirate vessel; day by day it preys upon the lawful commerce of all countries; its decks are wet with human blood, and its coffers laden with plundered gold. It is the terror of all navigators. Its every pursuit is destruction to the pursued. It fights no losing battles; the mightiest quail; the stoutest surrender.

I dream still: over the yielding billows there rides in proud majesty another vessel,—vaster, stronger, quicker; on board is a captain surpassing all in genius, in courage, in resources. Against his assaults all artillery is but as the rattle of a child's toy against the eternal granite. He strikes the pirate's ark once, and again he strikes, and once more;

until the timbers rend, and the enemy is engulfed in the great deep.

What is the interpretation of my vision? What but that DEATH is the great enemy coursing ever on the seas of human life, slaying the strong, blighting the beautiful, plucking away the young, and striking dread everywhere? And that great counteracting force, what is that but Christ who came to "abolish death," and give His saints full triumph? And ages upon ages hence, if men should inquire "Where is death?" they will be answered as with the voice of many waters—SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY!

### 836. A Limit to Proprietorship.

THERE are limits to proprietorship, there are boundaries to property, and ever and anon God comes down to us in some way, to say, "The earth is mine and the fulness thereof." No nation can live long in sweltering prosperity; sometimes, therefore, God comes down about harvest-time, and scatters a blight upon the wheatfield, and people wonder. Why? "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." May He not do what He will with His own? Sometimes He says to the wind, "Blow;" and the poor little structures of human skill are toppled over. Sometimes He says to the flood, "You may go over the line to-night—rush on!" and then men run away from the invading waters. Is it not *right*, but that now and then he should put in some kind of claim upon His own property? We hold it only as stewards; at best we have it but secondarily; it is His, and if it please Him to shake the roots of the earth—"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." And what shall we, even the mightiest, require? Just a handful of it at last, under which to hide our dead bones!

### 837. The Encircling Mystery.

THERE are mysteries about every side of the Divine administration, and we glory in this mystery. To-morrow is the

mystery of to-day ; night is the mystery of noontide ; immortality is the mystery of death ; heaven is the mystery of earth. I would not care to live if all mystery were taken away. It is in the exercise of a deep, tender, loving faith in the Unseen and the Unlimited, that I find joy which animates my suffering and wounded heart !

### 838. Sin Interpreted by the Cross.

THE Scriptures declare plainly that the cross stands in direct relation to *sin*. Sin necessitated a condition which love alone could meet. Holiness never caused death. All that comes within what may be called the sphere of death (pain, misery, disappointment, tears) is due immediately to moral decay. Throughout the Scriptures this principle is constantly affirmed, but nowhere is it seen in full force of demonstration but on the cross. It could not have been a trifle which started the great drops of blood from the body of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, or that caused Him His exceeding sorrow on the tree. Great natures cannot weep blood but on great occasions. There must, then, have been something terrible about this moral putrescence which is called *sin*. It was no speck on the surface ; it was poison in the blood. The tones heard at Golgotha are not the harsh tones of vengeance ; there is no scream of fury ; no thunder of cursing ; there is a wail of sorrow, deep, loud, long, as if the very heart of God had broken. It is the agony of love ; it is the paroxysm of a lacerated and dying spirit. It was love that had failed in life, determined to succeed in death. It was dying innocence struggling with dead guilt.

### 839. Seeing the Fruit of our Toil.

GOD will never let any true man fail of seeing the reward of his speech, his actions, his sufferings. The prophets are only behind the screen ; they are just on the thither side of the veil, and to-day they are seeing the results of their prophecies, and are being made glad in the Lord's presence.

To some of us it is given to speak a word only, that exhausts our mission. We desire to see the day of its fulfilment, but cannot do so ; but in as far as it is a true word its fulfilment shall surely come, and we shall see its realization, only from another standpoint. Let us take these things into account, to cheer us in many bewilderingments and perplexities of life. The father and the mother have often pinched themselves, that they might give their child a little more schooling and a little better opportunity in life, and have borne their sufferings and their self-denial quietly and even gladly. They sometimes said, "We should like to see our boy lifting up his head among yonder band of learned, illustrious, noble men. It will be a proud day for us when we see our son taking his seat among them." And they do not see it. They are cut down, they are borne away into the great darkness ; and their son comes to eminence, and honour, and exaltation. Their prayers and their services are realized in him, and he himself says sometimes, "I wish the old man could have seen me now, it would have repaid him for many a kind word and helpful deed. I wish my mother could have seen me. She would have been glad. How her eyes would gleam with a holy and Divine fire!" Who can tell what they see? There is nothing between us and the invisible but a veil. Who can say that it is not to them who are on yonder side transparent? Who can say that we are not victimized by the dullness of our physical vision? That they see when we little imagine they are looking? I rather incline to the higher side of that speculation, and delight to believe that all the saints and the angels of God who have ever taken part in human history are taking some part in it to-day.

#### 840. Men Blaming their Tools.

*How absurd it is for any man to blame his tools for bad work. Shamgar used an ox-goad ; Samson wielded the jawbone of an ass ; David had but a sling and a stone. Sometimes we think what wonders we could do if we had better instru-*



ments. The bad writer blames his pen. The unskilful carver grumbles at his knife. The unsuccessful preacher says that he could get a congregation if the pew doors were half an inch lower, or if the organ had another stop added. No! Again and again, *No!* Look at *yourself* more and at your tools less. What about your spirit? your intelligence? your devotedness? your enthusiasm?

#### 841. Healed!

HE is healed who *dies*. He who lives is patched up for a moment. Death is healing. We do so suffer by the narrowness of our interpretations. We put such small meanings upon words. When your dear little child was breathing its last, you said, "Oh, that it might be healed!" And when the last breath went out of it, it was healed! You said, "*Dead*;" the angels said, "*Born*." You said

"It was our home's undoing,  
Oh! the ruin!"

Jesus said, "Let the little one come unto Me." "Healed! Plagued, you mean; more keenly tried, you mean; tossed about more violently in the world, you mean." They are healed whom He takes. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; and the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

#### 842. Certainty of Death.

WE shall all die! Do not let us postpone the intimation of our need of the Son of God until we are so faint that we can only receive Him at the side of our death-bed. Do let us be more decent, more courteous, more civil. We shall all die! That is a fact that men have never been able to reason out of human history. If they could come to me and say, "We will guarantee you shall never die, you shall always be as you are—young and strong and active and

prosperous," then I might incline an ear to their reasonings more deferentially than I am disposed to do at present. But when they are talking to me against religion and against the deeper life, against faith and spiritual love and service of the unseen, what do I behold? Oh! this: Over their shoulder a grim ghastly spectre called *Death*!

#### 843. Christ's Love compared to the Sun.

OUR artificial lights can only give a little relief to the darkness of particular places; but the great sun in the heavens lightens, with impartial glory, the palace and the cot, the great landscape and the poor man's little garden,—it enters every garret and window, as well as penetrates all the sumptuousness of palaces. It is even so with the love of Christ. Some of us can only love particular kinds of character. We feel that we must draw a line when certain persons come into connection with us, for we really cannot understand them, or appreciate them, and therefore our love becomes cramped, and says, "I cannot go any further on." But Jesus can love us all. He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust; He understands our peculiarities; He knows through what processes we have passed—processes that have roughened us and made us unlovely, processes that have gone far to break down our very spirit. Yet He sees what is left in us, and with impartial benediction He would bless us all. As the great firmament holds the mighty sun and the tiny asteroid, so that greater heart of Christ folds in its infinite embrace all mankind. Why, then, should one of us—the obscurest, the poorest, the roughest, the worst—stand back, as though he had no God, as though His name had not been thought of when Calvary was made the centre of the universe!

#### 844. Man's Relation to the Cross.

MAN's relation to the Cross is a different thing to the relation of the Cross to man. In the latter we have God's declaration: what have we in the former? Man has the

power (necessary indeed to being a man) to treat the Cross with indifference, to join those who wagged their heads and uttered taunting words, and to see in the Cross nothing but an ignominious failure. God did not set up the Cross merely that He might win a victory, but that He might express a sorrow. If not a man be moved by the display of affection and grief, the Cross has not failed altogether of its purpose. The parent weeps even over the child that will not be recovered, and the weeping shows at once the agony and the love. It relieves him even to open the door which may never be entered by the wanderer. What if this be a hint of the feeling that is in God? What if his great sorrow must have an outlet, and if that outlet be the Cross?

#### 845. Dissuasions from the Right Course.

How are we to treat those who would dissuade us from great courses, from self-sacrifice, from noble actions? We are not to treat them with hesitation; we are not to treat them as if, after all, there may be something in what they say. There is nothing in it; and until you get up to that measure of inspiration that you can treat dissuasions from the right course as temptations from the devil, your life will be fickle and worthless. Alas! some of us have not spoken as we ought to have done to our tempters. When men have said to us, "Work a little less," we have said, "Well, perhaps you are speaking a wise word there." When they have said to us, "Don't attempt to do what you now propose, because it will be misunderstood by some, and will bring upon you censure and ridicule," we have said, "Well, after all, why should we expose ourselves to such possible—nay, to such probable, and almost inevitable consequences?" That is how we have talked, talked like drunken idiots! We have talked as if we had wise men to talk to. What should we have said? We should have said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." We should have called the man who would have saved us, not from mere temporal ruin, but from consequences that he was unable to measure, we should call him Satan, and order him off, and avoid him as our worst

foe. How some of us have babbled where we ought to have spoken decisively! A young man has been tempted after he has set himself to a good resolution. He said he would go to such and such a service, and help such and such a work, and would give himself night and day to this undertaking or that which had a Christian object in view. But he met on the road a friend of his who was unable to understand that kind of thing, and the friend said, "Why should you kill yourself before your time? Take it quietly and live twenty-five years longer. Why kill yourself in three years when you might live twenty?" And the boy has said, "That word was spoken in kindness." He was sure it was spoken with a good intention. The man who spoke it to him was very kind, and he apparently had his interests at heart. My friend, from whom do you take your marching orders—from God or from man, from the Master or from the servant? What if you are burned up in three years? If you be found watching unto the end, you shall be sooner into immortality, and heaven, and rest. The man said to you, "Why kill yourself in three years when you might live thirty?" He should have said, "Why go into heaven at the end of three years when you might keep out of it for ten times that period? Why go into higher service when you may be in the lower service so much longer? Why take unto yourself wings of light when you might walk so many years longer on your feet?" You should have called him foe! enemy! Satan! and have gone on.

#### 846. No Action of God Meaningless.

GOD does nothing unnecessarily, speaks nothing that seems exaggeration or superabundance. There is a meaning in the most delicate tint with which he hath varied any leaf; there is a significance in the tiniest drop of dew which ever sphered itself in beauty on the eyelids of the morning.

#### 847. The Mystery of Love.

MYSTERY! Dread Mystery! It surrounds us like an atmosphere. The mountain and the sea are covered with

the robe of mystery! Man's pulsating heart and the throbbing stars are alike mysterious. God in Providence, enwrapped in the cloud, or riding on the lightning, is mysterious. Jesus "the holy child," Jesus the crucified, is mysterious. The Holy Spirit quickening and regenerating, guiding and sanctifying, is mysterious. But, blessed be God, it is all the mystery of LOVE!

#### 848. Sin, a Blow at God's Holiness.

Is it (if the supposition may be allowed) anything merely *personal* which God condemns in the action of the sinner against Himself? Can the sinner do *God* any harm? Can the mightiest chief in all the armies of hell pluck one star from the sky, or keep back the light of the sun, or bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? God is not, so to speak, alarmed for His *personal* government. The offences against his *power* cost Him no concern, but the offences against His *holiness* afflict Him with great sorrow. The parent cares nothing for the mere blow of the child's tiny fist, but the passion which prompted it breaks his heart. God has to maintain the public virtue and order of the universe. He fears no stroke of power; but if, for mere convenience of expression, we may distinguish between His personality and His attributes, we may say that offences against His person are forgiven, but offences against His attributes cannot be forgiven apart from confession and repentance on the side of the criminal.

#### 849. Soul Life the True Life.

TRUE beauty is beauty of the heart, true greatness is greatness of the mind, abiding majesty is moral majesty; what thou art in reality, thou art in thy soul! The bloom shall be taken off thy cheek, the lustre shall be dimmed in thine eye, the sap shall be taken out of thy bodily strength: moral elements, spiritual qualities, spiritual beauties,—these survive all wrecks, these grow, these increase in lustre,

beauty, and worth ; these, partaking of the very nature and quality of God, shall abide through the ages of His own eternity !

**850. Self-sufficiency Destroyed.**

OUR self-sufficiency can be destroyed only through our self-gratification. Did not God allow us to carry out our will in many directions, there would linger in our hearts misgivings respecting the equity and perfectness of His government. We fix our eyes upon glittering objects in the distance, we regard those objects as of priceless value ; we believe that their possession will elevate and satisfy our best capacities and desires. God plainly tells us that what we desire will prove to be a mockery and a torment ; yet, in spite of this revelation, we renew our entreaties, and urge our demands. At length God says, " Take that you desire." We take it, and, lo, it poisons our life, and turns our future into an intolerable terror.

**851. Fragmentary Morality.**

AGAIN and again we hear pious persons giving the assurance that there are certain things that they would on no consideration think of doing. One man will exclaim that on no account would he travel on a Sunday—short-sighted man ! to think that because he would not travel on a Sunday, therefore his character is good. True morality is not a mere way of doing things, or leaving them undone, it is the expression of a right state of heart as before God. Mere fragments of morality, little coloured rags and patches of excellence, may actually be an aggravation of our guilt, because they show that we have some idea of the difference between right and wrong, yet content ourselves with a partial and nominal obedience to a few technical duties.

**852. The Providence-book.**

WHAT do you do when, in reading the massive folios of ancient English authors, you meet passages written in an

unknown tongue? Paragraph after paragraph you read with all possible fluency, instantly apprehending the author's purpose; but suddenly the writer throws before you a handful of Latin or a handful of Greek: what then? If you are absorbed by the interest of the book, you eagerly look out for the next paragraph in English, and continue your pursuit of the leading thought. Do likewise with God's wondrous providence-book. Much of it is written in your own tongue—in large-lettered English, so to speak: read that; master its deep significance, and leave the passages of unknown language until you are farther advanced in the rugged literature of life, until you are older and better scholars in God's probationary school. The day of interpretation will assuredly come.

#### 853. The Bent of Life.

As the trees in a district often show by the way in which they lean what is the prevailing direction of the wind, so everything in our life is to be bent towards the one point which is luring our energy and our hopes.

#### 854. The River Bridged.

LET me suppose that you are now on one side of a great, swollen, turbid river, and that you want to get home, and that in order to do so you must cross the rushing waters. But you cannot; you have looked and tried and consulted one with another; and there is the great, tumultuous difficulty in front of you, and you cannot grapple with it. I come to you and say, "Be it known to you, who wish to go home, that I have found a *bridge*." The very fact of my having told you so, alters the complexion of the whole case. You must prove me a liar before you can get back to your former state and condition of negative responsibility. You are bound to say, "Where?" I am bound to tell you *where*, and if after having pointed out the bridge—majestic, broad, high, free—you will not go home, then those you have left on the other side have a right to sum-

mon you to judgment and to condemn your conduct. Brethren, you are not on one side of a swollen river; but you are on one side and truth is on the other. How to get back to truth? What lies between? An infinite distance apparently. And there is amongst us a man, an apostle chosen of Jesus Christ—a strong-headed, single-hearted, earnest, glorious man—who says, “I tell you how the case stands! we are sinners, and Jesus Christ the Son of God is the way to forgiveness.” What are we bound to do? This: To disprove the statement, or accept it. If not; what then? To die!

**855. “Pleasures of Memory.”**

WHAT is our life when we have taken out of it all the recollections which redeem it from irreligiousness and vanity? Some of us would be poor indeed, were it not for the hidden treasures of secret memory. In our depression we remember the day of God’s deliverance. When we look onward, and see the distant horizon filled with angry clouds, we look back, and see the way of light along which God has conducted us; and the pious memories of a life which has been a succession of wonders, revive and establish our confidence in the Holy One.

**856. Modes of Living.**

WE live by revelation, when we live deeply; we live by faith, when we live wholly. He who only lives with his understanding lives upon a little sharp point, when he might have the freedom of the universe.

**857. Election.**

As to this matter of election, I would to God that some who object to it were as common-sense in this matter as they are in the daily actions of ordinary life. I ask for no higher degree of common sense. Let me assume that a purse has been lost in the street adjoining our place of meeting; the purse contains a thousand guineas; whoever finds that purse may keep it. “Ha!” we say, “well, only



one can find it; therefore what is the good of a thousand seeking it? Only one can have it; and if I am elected to be the man, it will come in my way." I never heard people reasoning so with regard to an affair of that kind. Though only one may have it, ten thousand will strive for it if they know the conditions. There is a prize to be given in the school. It is one prize; there are five hundred scholars in the school. The boys say, "Well, only one of us can get it, why should five hundred of us be toiling and fagging for it?" Another boy says, "I know if I am to have the prize, I will get it; so I shall read no books, and make no preparation." You would not allow a boy to reason so. Yet there are men who say this, "If we are called to heaven, we'll get to heaven; if we are elected to be saved, we need not make any effort about it." "Thou wicked and slothful servant: out of thine own mouth I condemn thee;" the whole action of thy evil life shall be thy answer on the day of judgment, and thou shalt be condemned to an ignominious silence because of a self-accusing conscience.

#### 858. Relation of Principle to Practice.

CHRIST never told His disciples not to go to the theatre, the race-course, or the revel; from end to end of His teaching no such prohibition can be found. What then did Christ do? He said, "Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good;" don't trim the leaves, vitalize the root; don't attach, but develop. He opened a wide field of philanthropic service, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, preaching liberty to the captive, he filled men with his own Spirit, and then left them to go whithersoever it would conduct them. Christ did not teach from the outward to the inward, but from the inward to the outward. It is better to give a man a good principle than a good practice; it is better to be good than merely to behave well; the one is character, the other is convenience.

**859. Crime and Sin.**

CRIME is one thing and sin is another. There may be sin where there is not what is generally known as crime. But there cannot be crime as between man and man, without a great offence having been committed as between man and God. Crimes are social; crime lies between man and man, between man and society, between man and human law. The magistrate takes note of crime. Crime can be measured, weighed;—can be pronounced upon and have adequate punishment meted out to it. But sin, who knows the nature thereof? and who has a line fine enough to measure it, or an eye penetrating enough to see it as it really is? None, but God only. I can forgive a crime. But I have no jurisdiction in the province of sin.

**860. Faith *v.* Belief.**

IT may appear that faith is an almost insignificant condition of membership in Christ's kingdom. Not so, however, when the matter is carefully considered. The word "belief" is not simple, but compound,—a term most inclusive and exacting. Popularly understood, "belief" is supposed to denote an act of the mind in relation to statements which may be laid before it; as, for example, a man believes that Milton wrote "*Paradise Lost*," that Columbus discovered America, or that a ship will leave Britain for Africa upon a given day. But such a belief may amount to nothing more than that the man does not *disbelieve* these statements; or if it mean that he has examined the evidence for himself, yet not one of the statements may touch his deepest nature: it would give him no concern to know that Milton wrote the "*Iliad*," and that Homer wrote "*Paradise Lost*," or that the ship in question is not going to Africa, but to Asia. The man cannot be said to "believe," in any deep and true sense of that term. Belief means more than any act of the mere understanding can ever mean. Religion is not so much an appeal to the intellectual as to the moral nature.

**861. Effects of Loss and Gain.**

*Loss* takes a man's character to pieces fibre by fibre, and shows him what he is made of. *Prosperity* takes a man to the edge of a great cliff, and proves whether he be a giddy adventurer or a wise and understanding pilgrim.

**862. By Love, not by Grammar.**

A LITTLE child says to his father, "Pa, me loves you great much;" and the father says, "You bad, bad little boy. Why, that is not grammar; what do you mean by talking so?" No, he loves the child almost the more for the bad grammar—it certainly takes nothing away from his love. There are a good many men in the Church, and others who *ought* to be in the Church, who talk bad grammar; but they have wonderful depth of real childlike love; and it is by *love* we are saved, not by *grammar*.

**863. Heart Love to Christ.**

DOES any man feel, in his heart, love towards Jesus Christ? Through Him is preached the forgiveness of sins. It is not necessary to *understand* these things, and to be able to argue about them, in order to get out of them all their grace and life and support. Speech is one thing; grammar is another. Life in Christ is one thing; theology is another. We are not good Englishmen because we are good grammarians; we are not good men because we are good debaters in theology. A man may be an Englishman, though he cannot tell whether the Plantagenets or Tudors came the first, or who signed Magna Charta, or whether it was ever signed at all. Call him *ignorant* if you please, charge him with want of information if you like, but you don't destroy his *nationality*.

**864. Ill-founded Success.**

THERE is a success which is but so much guilt. We get what we want, but the basis is rotten. We give up the


spiritual and invisible, and imagine that we are rich because we take in exchange mountains of dust and clouds of mist. Your house is noble, commodious, and extremely inviting; a ruddy light is shining through its windows; sounds of music and delight are filling its every chamber; yet, my friends, what of all this if your splendid mansion be founded on a bog?

#### 865. A Rounded Character.

THE highest life is not a question of mere points. It is possible for a flower to grow upon a dunghill. Most of us are victims of the fallacy that to have a good point or two is equal to having a good character, which is equivalent to saying that because a man's hand is jewelled, therefore his heart is rich.

#### 866. Diversities of Operation.

ALL men cannot work the same way: "There are diversities of operation." Upon the face of a watch you may see an illustration of my meaning. On that small space you have three workers: there is the second pointer, performing rapid revolutions; there is the minute pointer, going at a greatly reduced speed; and there is the hour pointer tardier still. Now any one unacquainted with the mechanism of a watch would conclude that the busy little second pointer was doing all the work,—it is clicking away at sixty times the speed of the minute pointer; and as for the hour hand, *that* seems to be doing no work at all. You can see in a moment that the first is busy, and in a short time you will see the second stir; but you must wait still longer to assure yourself of the motion of the third. So it is in the Church. There are active, fussy men, and others who are slower. But can we do without the minute and the hour pointers? The noisy second hand might go round its little circle for ever without telling the world the true time. We should be thankful for all kinds of workers. The silent, steady hour hand need not envy its noisy little colleague. Each man must fill the measure of his capacity.



**867. The Worn-out Applicant.**

JESUS CHRIST often has a stranger's name handed to Him. He has, as it were, to look at the card again and again, and to say—(if I may attribute to him aught of the limitation of human ignorance)—“Who is this? I have not seen this name before. Who calls upon me now?” And he finds that it is a worn-out old life; a shattered manhood, which being unable longer to enjoy the things of time and sense, begs an interview with One who is supposed to have healing and comfort at His disposal.

**868. Man's Outward Greatness should Indicate Inward Goodness.**

UGHT not the natural to be the expression of the spiritual? Ought a man to have a noble head, and nothing in it? great *physical* power, and no power of *soul*? an open, beautiful countenance, yet the heart of a hypocrite or the soul of a villain? As with personal appearance, so with social appearance. Our outward figure in society ought to mean something good; something according to the measure of its greatness, and the intensity of its splendour. Shall a man live in a great house, and be surrounded by all the signs of luxury and advanced civilization, and yet that appearance fail to denote that the inhabitant of that house and the owner of that property is a man of the noblest charity, and that what is round about him is but a poor figure and dim emblem of the reality of his spirit, and the inexhaustibleness of his love? A man ought not to feel himself at liberty to be inconsistent, to exhibit a daily discrepancy between his appearance and his reality, whether it be his personal appearance or his social appearance. If he have been gifted, either in one way or another, with great and notable outward blessings, those gifts ought to lead him to the consideration of questions of intellectual and moral culture; so that the outward, however great and impressive, may be but a feeble indication of inward wealth, the richness of his

knowledge, the depth and truth, the purity and gentleness, of his soul!

**869. "Flourish in Immortal Life."**

THE oak rises, flourishes, dies; empires are ploughed up by their foundations; the most splendid monuments of civilization wane and vanish; but the renewed mind, the sanctified heart, will grow for ever, unimpaired by wasting ages, finding even in their satisfaction an incitement to profounder worship and wider service.

**870. Quenching the Spirit.**

HERE is a man who has made up his mind to an act of self-denial. He says, "I shall no longer continue in this course. I like it, it pleases me in many ways. Nothing gratifies me so much as this; but I shall not do it." And the time comes when he must do it, if he is to do it at all. It is but a few minutes to the hour now, and he says, "I shall not do it, I shall not do it;" and the minutes go one by one, and he says, "I do not think I shall do it;" and the minutes tick themselves away, and it is, "Well, perhaps if I go this time, and do it just once more, it will not look so abrupt as if I were to do it all at once. I shall do it just this once, and no more. This shall be the last time of my going—I will never go any more." And he goes, and hell is moved at his going; and if there might be gladness, there is joy in the caverns of darkness. What has the man done? Quenched the Spirit, by grieving it. He still has something of resolution in him; there is still the wreck of the holy vow in his heart; but he has quenched the Holy Ghost in the proportion that he has grieved it.

**871. Growth.**

GROWTH in Divine life is not only growth in Divine joys, it is growth in pain, it is growth in torment, because growth in sensibility and growth in the highest capacity.

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**872. God's Way—Halo'd in Mystery.**

God's way amid the events which make up our daily life is dark and often undiscoverable, so is His way of working out the salvation of men. God never comes to us, as it were, in white light; He rather darts an occasional ray of glory upon us from the pavilion of thick darkness, and by these intermittent revelations our way is to be directed. At no point are we permitted to become familiar with His method; He will show us a star, but we must not touch it; He will cause a flower to grow upon the grave, but will not hand us the keys of death; He awakens many a cheering note in the intertangled and melancholy forests, through which lies the narrow path of our life, but we may not penetrate the sombre and perilous solitudes. This is for the chastening of our ambition, and the training of our strength. We must be still before God. If we understood Him altogether we should no longer be men; we love Him, and therefore grow in understanding. He conducts us, not towards exhaustion, but towards ever-expanding capacities of mind and heart.

**873. One Life only an Argument against God.**

WHAT would be thought of a man who built a splendid chariot and could not get it out of the workshop in which he had constructed it? Instantly and justly it would be said that the man had made a ludicrous as well as an expensive mistake. This is in degree precisely the position of God, if in this life only we have hope. He has made a noble vessel—perfect in its proportions, exquisite in its adaptations, sumptuous in its appointments—and he can't find water enough for it! He has set the great ship in a little shallow pool, and left it to rot because there is no deep upon whose waters He can launch so vast and splendid a vessel! As with the ship so with the chariot. God has built a chariot worthy of a king, and, lo! He cannot get it out of the little rickety workshop in which he built it!

**874. The Tenderness of God.**

WHAT do we care about those that are afar off, whether their actions be pleasant or unpleasant—whether they be moral or vicious. But when you are told that a certain child has done wrong, you instantly feel, if you know the parent of the child, that the wound inflicted on the parental heart must be very acute and deep. You express pity for the parent, because of the closeness of the relation subsisting between the person who has done wrong and the person who will suffer most deeply from that wrong. The parent mourns over his wandering, prodigal child. The mother spends her days in thought and her nights in prayer, when she thinks of her boy that is far away from that which is right and pure and true and good. Her heart is grieved. She could not grieve so much over anybody else's boy: it is over her own child that she melts in tenderness, and that she trembles almost with hopelessness. And if there be any truth at all in this human analogy, it does give us views of the tenderness, the sensibility, the love of the Divine, which we could not otherwise obtain. That the Holy Ghost is grieved with us at all, is, I repeat, a suggestion of the depth of tenderness that is in God, which is unfathomable and inexpressible. Why does He not put His foot upon us and crush us out of existence? Why does He allow one pang to afflict His heart, when by the doubling up of His fist He might crush the universe into death? And yet it doth please Him to gather us as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings; it doth please Him to say, that when women have forgotten their sucking children, even then He will not forget us.

**875. True Preaching.**

AWAY with everything from the pulpit that is not vital and fundamental! Away with fine-spun cobwebs of argument,—away with the noisy steam of rhetoric,—away with so-called beautiful images, pictures, and illustrations,—and take your stand upon exact and necessary spiritual defini-



tions! Your ministry will then be rich, useful, and successful,—successful in the only sense worth caring for; successful in the quickening and instruction of souls. Your preaching will be scientific, too! It will not affect the pedantry of *sciolism*, but penetrate to the very base of truth itself. God of light! help us: show us *Thy* meaning and purpose in all the holy words we use, and deliver the souls of men into our hands as captains of Thine host!

• 876. **Self-control.**

SOMETIMES strength is quite as distinctly asserted in *not* doing as in doing. Some displays of strength are displays of selfishness. They are inspired by a self-confident and boastful spirit, and are intended to elicit the applause of observers. The self-controlled nature is necessarily exposed to the misinterpretation of those who are governed entirely by their senses. Read the life of Jesus Christ for examples of perfect strength. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not."

877. **Moral Sensitiveness.**

HAS a Christian then no contention in his life? Is his whole course one of unruffled serenity? No! No man has to encounter such severe contentions as fall to the lot of the Christian; his moral sensitiveness is so excited that he feels a shadow where once he would not have felt a blow; he peers into spiritual meanings where once he would have been contented with ordinary significations. But with his moral sensitiveness there has been imparted to him a new source of strength. The grace which has given him a new conscience has also given him a new ability.

878. **. God in Everything.**

LOOK for *God* when thou lookest at the *dust*. The dust is alive with the life of God. He is in every tree-root even in the cold winter. He is in the water trickling in the unbored rock. God is not a God afar off; He breathes on

thee night and day. Thou art not clever enough to reap the great stars, yet mayest thou spell what is written at thy feet. The star-God is the flower-God. These flowers might be the scattered fragments of His stars; gather the fragments, that nothing be lost!

### 879. Scattering, yet Increasing.

WHEN Jonathan loved David, he little knew that he was laying up a store of love for a poor lame boy of his own. Kind deeds do not terminate in themselves. When you take a child off the streets, teach, clothe, and help him, you may actually be laying up a fortune for a child of your own not yet born! "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." Good deeds are roots that will come to fruitfulness. There are more ways than one of laying up for your children. Bequeath them the dowry of a noble life on your own part.

When a man says to you, "Your father was kind to me in a time of great distress," you enter upon the possession of your best fortune, etc. When a woman says, "Your mother came to me when nobody else would come, and but for her I should have died," you enter upon riches unsearchable and imperishable.

Lay up *mere money* for your child, and it may be wasted. It is like laying up artificial flowers.

How stimulating is this consideration to every man who honestly tries to do good! He will not do it from a *selfish* motive. If he could do so, his object would be thwarted.

### 880. Dishonouring Christ.

A DISCORDANT Church is a reflection upon the moral power of the Saviour, for *without Christ the Church could not be in existence*. The world has a right to compare the deeds of the servant with the spirit of the Master, because the connection is *moral*, and consequently involves responsibility. Take the case on a lower ground. A recently-erected edifice has fallen: how do men treat the fact?

They instantly connect it with the architect or the builder. When a chemical experiment has failed, how is it looked upon? Instantly the manipulator is blamed for want of skill, or for want of judgment in the selection of the quality of his materials. So all the practices of the Church are carried back to Christ, and *He* is magnified, or "crucified afresh," according to their nature.

### 881. Stimulate Noble Intentions.

WHENEVER we have heard a friend of ours propose to do something that was novel, startling, extraordinary, trying, we have instantly begun to suggest the difficulty, and to tell him he had better think no more about it. It is so difficult to get ordinary heads to understand extraordinary schemes; so impossible almost to get certain persons to understand that that which is sown must die before it spring up and bear fruit. Let us not repeat the fault. When your boy says to you suddenly, some day, "Father, I think I shall be a missionary and go abroad, and preach to the heathen," don't you put your hand upon the lad's ambition, and put it down; don't throw any impediment in his way. Hear him on another occasion, encourage him to think still further of the scheme; and though the announcement of the lad's idea tear your very heart-strings, because you have said, This son shall comfort me in my old age and feebleness, yet give him time to think about it, and show him the whole case as far as it reveals itself to your own mind, and rather stimulate than discourage him when his mind is set in a philanthropic and noble direction. And so when your husband proposes to give some large sum to this good institution or that, don't tell him that the half of it will do, because he will probably believe you,—it is so easy to go down, and so difficult to get up. Sometimes people require a lift up; they require all the encouragement and applause that can be accorded to them to go one step higher. When he says, therefore, he thinks he will give fifty guineas to it, don't tell him pounds will do. Nobody says pounds, who can say guineas. When a man

proposes to do something noble, generous, encouraging to others, say to him if you can, "Double it!" never say to him, "Réduce it." You have no idea how instantly some men are discouraged, and how very soon others respond to a word of stimulus and encouragement.

### 882. Beginning of Moral Perfection.

WHAT does moral perfection *begin* in? It begins in the disposition, in the will, in the heart. If you are urged to escape from polar winter, with its ice, and snow, and frost, and barrenness, to tropical summer, with its warmth, and flowers, and geniality, and luxuriance, is it meant that you are to accomplish the journey at one long stride, or that it is to be completed step by step, little by little? When a child is required to become perfect as a musician, is it intended that in one day his uncrafty fingers shall liberate the angel-strains that are jailed in the musical instrument? Or is it meant that he shall master the gamut, and grope his way through the scale, and gently touch the unknown notes to ascertain, as if by a whisper, whether they are the strains of which he is in quest, and proceed with all diligence and zeal until the instrument shall tell all its secrets, and shake with many-voiced delight at the touch of his friendly hand? Were you to tell an acorn to become perfect as an oak, would you mean that all the growing was to be completed in a night, or that the development was to proceed gradually, unfolding branch after branch, bud after bud, leaf after leaf, till it became a great cathedral-tree, in which the feathered choristers should pour out their songs in the hearing of God. It is even so with our Saviour. When He tells us to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect, He means that we are to *grow* in grace; we are to "press toward the mark;" we are to set our faces toward the holy temple. Not only so. In all our growing and striving, Christ Himself is with us and His grace is all-sufficient. "Work out your own salvation," &c.

**883. Religion and Philanthropy Identical.**

RELIGION and philanthropy are identical. The *religious* men of any age are also its practical philanthropists. It is impossible for any man deeply to care for the house of God without caring also for *human* interests and social obligations. He who works for *God*, will work also for *man*. Religion is not one bright patch upon the motley garb, it is a seamless robe of beauty worthy of the heavenly sonship of which it is the pledge.

**884. What is Peace?**

TAKE the word *Peace*. Here we have another word of one syllable which every child at school is supposed to understand. But *do* we understand it? What is peace? You look at a graveyard, and suppose from the silence which broods there that the scene is peaceful. No! You look upon the dead body of your friend, and say how peaceful. No! Death is not peace; nor is indifference; nor is silence. Peace is the result of a composition and reconciliation of forces. Peace is choral. You point to a stuffed bird in a glass case, and say how *peaceful* the little thing looks. No! Look up into the blue morning: see yonder dim speck: hear that ecstatic trill: that singing, fluttering, quivering lark is a better emblem of peace than the poor stuffed skin under the glass dome! It is one thing to be at peace with man, and another to be at peace with God. We may have no strife with our neighbours, yet our life may be one continuous controversy against all that is holy in the universe.

**885. Sincere Speech.**

WE grow more and more away from the candour which underlies and beautifies all truly sincere speech. We begin in childhood with wonderful candour, beautiful simplicity of intercourse, and we grow away from that into conventionality and artificialism; and he is the clever man who can best conceal himself. A lady was talking some time ago,

and in the course of her speech she said that a friend of hers had very much injured his *heye*. A little boy heard her, and looking at her most seriously he said, "You should not say *heye*; you should say *eye*." Ten years after that the little boy will never think of telling a person who falsely uses the aspirate of such a fault as that; he will feel quite shame-faced when anybody tells him that once he spoke so to a lady. But will he be a better man for it? What will he do twenty years after? He will then go to some little secret company and say, "I heard so and so yesterday, and she called the eye a *heye*," and they will all laugh over it. And that will be called courtesy and self-restraint and propriety! No. The little boy was in the right of it. If people would speak thus plainly—being willing, observe, to be spoken to again with equal plainness, and that, too, in a right spirit—there would be a good deal of practical schoolmastering done in the world.

#### 886. Temptations.

THERE are temptations in life—temptations at every turning of the street—temptations in all the evolutions of daily circumstances—temptations that come suddenly—temptations that come unexpectedly—temptations that come flatteringly. There is no true, all conquering, all triumphant answer to the temptation of the devil but this—*God!* Be deep in your religion, have foundations that are reliable, know your calling, and God will protect you when the time of battle and storm and flood shall come. He will do it, if so be we put our trust in Him.

#### 887. "Rest a While."

"REST a while"! Why, it is a *mother's* word; she says to her little weary child who has toddled itself out of breath, "Rest a while." It is the word of a great, generous, noble-hearted leader of men. He says, "My company must have rest. I know I am sent to gain victories and conquests, and to work great programmes; but in the mean time my

over-worked men must have *rest*." It is a gentle word. Where do you find such gentleness as you find in Jesus Christ?

### 888. Development.

I PLANTED a little seed, and, as I was hiding it away in the dark ground, it asked me why I did not let it lie in the sunshine, where it could see the bright blue day and hear the singing birds. I answered, "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." The sun came and the dew and the living air, and for a while they tarried at the prison-door of the seed. By and by the prisoner came forth, beautiful in form and exquisite in colour; day by day it grew in strength and increased in loveliness; and in the fulness of the summer-time it knew, without asking me, why I had hidden it in the earth. It is even so with children whose minds and memories are stored with the truths of God's Word. At first they know but the letter. The knowledge of the letter may come through strife and pain. For long years it may lie dead in the heart; but in some season of special sorrow, in the day of trouble and sore distress, when heart and flesh do fail, it may arise and bring deliverance, and lead away the soul into the very presence of God.

### 889. Self-revelation.

SOME men will speak to us and get nothing in return. Other men will speak to us and they will surprise us,—get revelations, expositions, declarations, which perhaps we had never intended to make, and of which we did not know ourselves capable of making. When Johnson lay a dying, and Burke called upon him, he said, "Don't let me see him! That fellow will kill me in an hour." He could have seen many other men, and they would never have injured him; they would not have drawn upon his life; they would not have drawn upon the sap of his manhood. But when a great man like Edmund Burke

called upon him, whose every question called for a revelation, whose every suggestion sounded the depths of the mind, he said, "I can't bear him; he will kill me in an hour."

**890. Life a Drama.**

YOU run against a man in the dark; he remonstrates with you in a vexed tone, and in that vexed tone you hear the voice of your own long-lost brother. You go over the street without knowing what you have gone for, and you meet the destiny of your life. A child tells you its little dream, and that dream awakens some blessed memory which throws light upon some dark and frowning place in your life. Some people don't believe in dramas, not knowing that all life is an involved ever-moving, ever-evolving drama. Life is a composition of forces.

**891. God's Infinite Resource.**

IT is enough for God if He limit April to thirty days; He does not want it on the thirty-first day; it ceases, and goes back into His great heaven, and May begins. He does not bring back Eighteen Seventy into Eighteen Seventy-one, and say, "There, I have brushed it up for you, and made the best of it I can: you must try it again." No. He takes the years, blows them away; creates new ones; never gives you an old leaf, or tells you to put a faded flower into water and try to get up its colours and its fragrance again. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

**892. Christ's Care over Trifles.**

THERE is nothing about us that Jesus Christ does not care for. To Him there are no trifles. When a child falls down in the streets, why, rather than the child should perish there, He would arrest the stars and tell the world to stand still till He gathered it up! That is the kind of Christ we want; not a golden exhalation, evaporating con-



stantly before us, shot through and through with light,—very beautiful to look at, but nothing to rest upon! We want the Christ that takes an interest in our daily bread, in our nightly sleep, in our occasional pain,—in our humanity in all its lower conditions, in all its more dependent circumstances and relationships.

### 893. The Compassion and Mercy of God.

WHY these two beautiful words, each a piece of music, “Mercies,” “Compassions.” A man can only get into that view of government by living the deepest possible life. We are always jealous when we find sentiment entering into governmental relations and governmental decisions. But, here is God, Almighty God, and all tender, ruling with infinite majesty, stooping with more than motherly grace. God’s government is not composed of huge unsympathetic, tearless strength. A God all strength would be a monster. A God throned on ivory, ruling the universe with a sceptre of mere power, could never establish himself in the confidence and love and trust of his creatures. We might fear him, but when we got together in some corner where his face was excluded for a moment, we should turn round upon him with many execrations!

### 894. True Life Independent of Circumstances.

WHEN men live in their circumstances they never can be prosperous. When a man has to go out into his wheat-field to know whether there is going to be a good crop before he can really enjoy himself,—that man does not know what true joy is. When a man has to read out of a bank-book before he dare take one draught out of the goblet of happiness,—that man’s thirst for joy will never be slaked. Man cannot live in wheat-fields and bank-books and the things of the present world. If he cannot live within himself, in the very sanctuary and temple of God, then he is at the sport of every change of circumstance,—one shake of the telegraph wire may unsettle him, and the cloudy day

may obscure his hopes and darken what little soul he has left.

### 895. Old Ministers.

I HAVE sympathy with old ministers who have old-world notions; who view with what appears to younger men an almost ungenerous suspicion and distrust what they call new-fangled notions and methods of doing things. After all, there is a good deal of human nature and common-sense in the old man's view of the changes which are proposed to him. He started from a given point; he has worked along a certain line; a man cannot disinherit and dispossess himself of all his own learning, culture, traditions, and associations, and go back again or go forward into the infancy of new and startling movements. It would be well if some of us could learn this more profoundly. Young Englandism must be very distasteful to old Samuels, high priests, and venerable prophets. We shall show our strength by showing our moderation; we shall be most mighty when we are most yielding!

### 896. Light and Shade in Human Experience.

WHAT can the barn-door fowl know of the experiences of a disabled eagle? The man who is breaking stones on the highway may never be depressed, but his elder stone-breaking brother, who moulds marble into angels, may often sigh for a clearer light and a daintier touch. So everything depends upon the world we live in; and depend upon it, there is something wrong with a man somewhere if he be always in the same high key. No year that God ever made was made from beginning to end of July.

### 897. Reasons for Christian Cheerfulness.

WHEN Jesus Christ was going away, He said to His wondering disciples, "I go to prepare a place for Myself"? No! "For *you*." And the Apostle Paul, catching his Master's sublime tone, said, "All things are yours." And

Peter, thunder-tongued, cried out, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Yet we hang our heads like whipped dogs, and moan and cry and fret and chafe as if we had nothing, unless we had in our hand and could lace our fingers around it,—not knowing that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

### 898. Sincerity.

THERE is not a man who would not applaud sincerity as much as I should; yet when we come to apply sincerity, we all quail before it and protest against it. It is so in the exposition of Divine truth. I may say in general terms to all the world, "You are sinners before God," and I should be declared to be laying down sound doctrine. But if I lay my hand upon any *one* man and say, "You are a bad man," you will say I have offended him and been rude to him. We can sit and hear the *world* condemned and sentenced to be hanged; but when all this generality is narrowed down to a personal application—without which application the doctrine is simply sounding brass—we begin to complain that we have been rudely treated.

### 899. Mutual Dependency.

No man can do without his fellow-men. It is a very sad thing indeed that we have to be obliged in any sense to a butler or a baker. But we can't help it. It is no good our attempting to shake out of the sack the elements we do not like. We cannot colonize ourselves in some fairy-land, where we can have everything just according to our pick and choice. The labourer in the streets, the child in the gutter, the poor suffering wretch in the garret,—all these, as well as your kings and priests, have to do with the grand up-making and mysterious total of the thing we call human life.

**900. Position and Responsibility.**

WE think it a great honour to be set high in the service of God; it is so truly, yet it must be a burdensome responsibility, and often a pricking thorn, for those who follow can bring reproach and calumny to bear upon Abram and Moses and the chosen servants of God. There is a temptation for Lot to imagine himself as good as Abram, and in that imagining is the explanation of many of the petty torments which fall to the lot of men whom God has taken into His secret counsel.

**901. "Being Dead yet Speaketh."**

ALL character leaves more or less of influence behind it. Is that child of yours dead, that years ago, with a bursting heart, you laid under the sod? As long as you carry her fair face in your eye's picture-book—as long as her charming prattle is memoried in your faithful ear—as long as you thrill under a well-remembered touch of her soft little hand—so long the child is not dead, but sleepeth. Is your companion dead with whom you were wont to take sweet counsel? You hid no secrets from each other. In the new-born light and in the deepening shade you walked together, talked together, exchanged speculations, and compared experiences. The one was the complement of the other. And now that you know him no longer after the flesh, is he therefore dead? Verily, no. So thoroughly were you one in all your higher instincts and aspirations, that even now you feel as though you could consult him; even now he—

"Comes to your side in the twilight dim,  
When the spirit's eye only sees."

Even now, with mystic mien and hallowing voice, he takes part in the counsels of your life.

**902. Day of Vengeance.**

THE day of vengeance will be spiritual. We may figure the day of vengeance by outward signs. We point to the fire, and we say, "There, that is a symbol of the day of vengeance." We follow the course of the lightning, and we say, "There, that is an emblem of vengeance." But these things are but outward symbols: the true and terrible vengeance is spiritual. When a man's heart gets up within him and says, "Yes, there is liar written on your forehead; there is villain written on the inmost folds of your life," that is vengeance. When evil memories are awakened, and get round a man like so many grim, grisly spectres, and afflict him out of his self-contentment, that is vengeance.

**903. God's Calls Upward.**

THIS may be taken as a law: God's calls are upward; they are calls towards fuller life, purer light, and sweeter joy. Men do not know their full capacity except in their service of God: His presence in the soul is a life-expanding and life-glorifying presence. This is the claim that we set up on behalf of true religion—the religion of Jesus Christ—that it exalts human nature, it enriches the soul, it increases the substance and worth of manhood. To confound obedience with slavery, is to overlook the argument which is founded upon the nature of God; to obey the little, the mean, the paltry, is to be enslaved; to enter the cage of custom or passion, is to be subject to bondage; but to accept the invitation of the Sun, and to poise ourselves in his gladdening presence, is liberty and joy.

**904. Necessity of Illumination of Holy Ghost.**

THE other day, in riding through your city streets, what did I see? I saw this; I can affirm it, I can swear it! I saw *Murder! Pardon! Reward!* Have I not eyes to see? I drove past quickly, but I tell you solemnly that I saw

these words upon one of your city walls; and I infer this from the capital letters,—that murder has been committed, that pardon is offered to the murderer, and that a reward is promised to his bloody hand! Don't talk to me. Can I not see? can I not read plain English? were the letters not very conspicuous? But you instantly tell me that if I was driving past so, I did not see the words that were between the capital lines. I was attracted by the great letters. If I had read more closely, which I could not do from the position I occupied, I should have seen that the case was altogether contrary. Murder had been committed—true; but the reward was offered to any one who could bring the offender to justice; and even the accomplice, in some degree, would be pardoned if he could secure the conviction of the principal offender.

So it is in moral judgments generally. There are great capital lines we can read, there are great, broad distinctions we can make. But there are small lines, there is a minute printing, there are very microscopic shades, which we cannot find out unless we have the assistance of God the Holy Ghost.

### 905. The True Standard.

WE all have the sense of hearing, it may be; we know one tone from another. We are able to say, "That is what is called a sacred tune, and this a common or secular one." So far we are upon an equality. But where is the man who would rest upon the mere hearing of his ear, if he could have access to scientific standards, to rules of music that have been settled by the masters of the art? There is not a man amongst us who would trust his criticism to his unassisted ear; he calls for rules and canons and standards, for decisions that have been agreed upon by the great masters of music. What if in the higher concerns of life, in the higher training of our moral nature, we require something out of and beyond ourselves, that shall be special in its quality and decisive in its authority?

**906. God All-wise.**

Is God all-wise? Then the darkest providences have meaning. We *will* set ourselves as God's interpreters, and because we cannot make straight lines out of our crooked lot we think that God has turned our life into inextricable confusion. The darkest hours in our life have some intent, and it is really not needful that we should know all at once what that intent is. Let us keep within our own little sphere, and live a day at a time, and breathe a breath at a time, and be content with one pulsation at a time, and interpretation will come when God pleases, and as He pleases.

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WILL those moral lunatics, who are so selfishly devoted to their own immediate interests, reflect how much they themselves were indebted to their forerunners? Do they sufficiently consider that they themselves were *not born into an unfurnished house*? Who built the temples, fabricated the machinery, patronized the discoveries, wrote the literature, which make up the world's great bulk? How came we into possession of riches so vast, so golden? Who opened the thousand fountains, whose living waters turn the very desert into a fruitful field? How such things tell of ancestry! How they bind us to the past! How they multiply our obligations! It clearly comes to this, that every man of us is *born deeply in debt*. Have we paid the poets that have sung to us? Have we paid the mechanicians who have shown us that knowledge is power? Have we paid the mariners who have found out a highway over the billows? Have we paid the authors who have turned our solitude into society? Every one of us is deeply in debt. The Past is our patient and gracious creditor, and our obligations can only be paid to the Future.

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WE know the ordinary excuse that is made when the Christian marries one who has no devotional sympathies: the

generous, hopeful, self-sacrificing woman openly avows her belief that in a very little time she will be able to bring her intended husband to a right decision; she knows (poor creature!) that there is something good in him; she has heard (O mocking ear!) him say words which she construed into a noble intention on his part; she is sure all will be right by and by; a little patience, a little humouring, and a little instruction—then all will be right! This is the dream of her love, the inspiration of her ill-directed hope. Don't account me cruel when I denounce it as an imposition—a deceit—a lie!

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THE combination of great power and great restraint, and, indeed, the combination of opposite qualities and uses generally, is well known in the ordinary arrangements of civilized life and the daily operation of the laws of nature. The measure of greatness is the measure of terribleness. What is constructiveness but the beneficent side of destructiveness? The fire that warms your chamber when properly regulated, will, if abused, reduce your proudest palaces to ashes. The river, which softens and refreshes the landscape, if allowed to escape its banks, may devastate the most fruitful fields. The engine, which is swiftly bearing the laughing child to his longed-for home, will, if mismanaged, occasion the most terrible havoc. The lightning, which may be caught and utilized by genius and skill, can burn the forest, and strike armies blind. We are familiar with such illustrations of united opposites, and our knowledge of them inspires our enterprise, and attempers with prudence the noble audacity of practical science. In Isaiah we are confronted with the highest expression of the same truth—the mighty God is the Everlasting Father; the terrible one is gentler than the gentlest friend; He who rides in the chariot of the thunder stoops to lead the blind by a way that they know not, and to gather the failing lambs in His bosom.



stantly before us, shot through and through with light,—very beautiful to look at, but nothing to rest upon! We want the Christ that takes an interest in our daily bread, in our nightly sleep, in our occasional pain,—in our humanity in all its lower conditions, in all its more dependent circumstances and relationships.

### 893. The Compassion and Mercy of God.

WHY these two beautiful words, each a piece of music, “Mercies,” “Compassions.” A man can only get into that view of government by living the deepest possible life. We are always jealous when we find sentiment entering into governmental relations and governmental decisions. But, here is God, Almighty God, and all tender, ruling with infinite majesty, stooping with more than motherly grace. God’s government is not composed of huge unsympathetic, tearless strength. A God all strength would be a monster. A God throned on ivory, ruling the universe with a sceptre of mere power, could never establish himself in the confidence and love and trust of his creatures. We might fear him, but when we got together in some corner where his face was excluded for a moment, we should turn round upon him with many execrations!

### 894. True Life Independent of Circumstances.

WHEN men live in their circumstances they never can be prosperous. When a man has to go out into his wheat-field to know whether there is going to be a good crop before he can really enjoy himself,—that man does not know what true joy is. When a man has to read out of a bank-book before he dare take one draught out of the goblet of happiness,—that man’s thirst for joy will never be slaked. Man cannot live in wheat-fields and bank-books and the things of the present world. If he cannot live within himself, in the very sanctuary and temple of God, then he is at the sport of every change of circumstance,—one shake of the telegraph wire may unsettle him, and the cloudy day

may obscure his hopes and darken what little soul he has left.

**895. Old Ministers.**

I HAVE sympathy with old ministers who have old-world notions; who view with what appears to younger men an almost ungenerous suspicion and distrust what they call new-fangled notions and methods of doing things. After all, there is a good deal of human nature and common-sense in the old man's view of the changes which are proposed to him. He started from a given point; he has worked along a certain line; a man cannot disinherit and dispossess himself of all his own learning, culture, traditions, and associations, and go back again or go forward into the infancy of new and startling movements. It would be well if some of us could learn this more profoundly. Young Englandism must be very distasteful to old Samuels, high priests, and venerable prophets. We shall show our strength by showing our moderation; we shall be most mighty when we are most yielding!

**896. Light and Shade in Human Experience.**

WHAT can the barn-door fowl know of the experiences of a disabled eagle? The man who is breaking stones on the highway may never be depressed, but his elder stone-breaking brother, who moulds marble into angels, may often sigh for a clearer light and a daintier touch. So everything depends upon the world we live in; and depend upon it, there is something wrong with a man somewhere if he be always in the same high key. No year that God ever made was made from beginning to end of July.

**897. Reasons for Christian Cheerfulness.**

WHEN Jesus Christ was going away, He said to His wondering disciples, "I go to prepare a place for Myself"? No! "For *you*." And the Apostle Paul, catching his Master's sublime tone, said, "All things are yours." And

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undoubtedly an individual act; the soul must think, repent, believe, resolve for itself. No man can repent or believe for another, yet in the working out of Divine plans one man must follow another, and be content to shine with reflected light. It is so in statesmanship, in literature, and in civilization generally.

**920. The Pasture the Way to the Slaughter-house.**

Is God all-mighty, all-mighty? Then do not imagine you can escape His judgments. His lightnings find us out. His sharp spear penetrates our secrecy. You have evaded Him now fifty years, and you think you can do it fifty more. Believe me, as speaking the word of the Lord, *you cannot*. Has the ox that has been driven into the fat pasture escaped the knife? Look at the noble animal there. Look at the rich grass or clover, and see the sunshine falling upon the scene, and the ox says, "I am at rest, I have escaped the knife of the slayer," not knowing that the pasture is on the way to the slaughter-house, and that next to its death stands the rich blessing of its life. There are many oxen that are being prepared for the slaughter when they little think it.

**921. The Full-orbed Christ.**

You will be superficial interpreters if you imagine that Christ's birth was anything less than His death. We err, not knowing the Scriptures, when we separate Christ's life into little portions, and say in any sense that destroys their unity, This was His birth, and that was His death. The moment He came into the world He died; when He became a child, He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The birth was the death, the death was the birth; the whole incarnation was the atonement. When He breathed our tainted air He began to die for the sins of the world.

**922. Falling into the Hands of God.**

TAKE a debated legal case. In the first instance it may be brought before the local magistracy; but, very possibly, the result may be considered unsatisfactory by one party or the other, hence the case may be moved to the court above; there again dissatisfaction may be the result, and an appeal may be carried to the highest court in the land. The decision of that court carries with it the advantage that at all events nothing further can be done—all that legal learning, acumen, skill, and experience can do, has been done. The result, even then, may not be satisfactory; still, by so much as the case has been carried to the highest tribunal, and pronounced upon by the highest wisdom, there is strong ground to rest upon. Not only so, there is a point beyond this; for by so much as the man wishes that there were a higher court still to which an appeal might be made, does he show how deeply graven upon the heart is the law, that it is better to fall into the hands of the highest than into the hands of the lowest; that it is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. It is quite true that the decision of the highest may not bring with it satisfaction to the mind; that is not the point before us; the one point is, that men do aspire to have their cases determined, not by the lowest, but by the highest authorities in the land, and it is only by so much as they are persuaded that they have had access to those highest authorities, that they approach anything like a condition of rest and satisfaction.

**923. Stagnant Men.**

HAVE hope of men who think; though at first they may think crookedly, perversely, and indistinctly. Have faith in any sign of life. It is when men are stagnant that you may give up hope. It is when men have no questions to ask that you may pronounce them *dead*.

**924. Power of Faith.**

HE who walks by sight only, walks in a blind alley. He who does not know the freedom and joy of reverent, loving speculation, wastes his life in a gloomy cell of the mouldiest of prisons. Even in matters that are not distinctively religious, faith will be found to be the inspiration and strength of the most useful life. It is faith that does the great work of the world. It is faith that sends men in search of unknown coasts. It is faith that re-trims the lamp of inquiry, when sight is weary of the flame. It is faith that unfastens the cable and gives men the liberty of the seas. It is faith that inspires the greatest works in civilization. So we cannot get rid of religion unless we first get rid of faith, and when we get rid of faith we give up our birth-right and go into slavery for ever.

**925. Mystery.**

THERE is mystery about religion, but there is ten thousand times more mystery without it. There is mystery with the Bible, but there is nothing but mystery without it. There is a mystery of *grace*; yes, and there is a mystery of *sin*. Life is a mystery. All that is great touches the mysterious. In proportion as a thing rises from vulgarity and commonplace, it rises into wondrousness,—and wondrousness is but the first round in the ladder whose head rests upon the infinite mysteries.

**926. Posthumous Influence.**

POSTHUMOUS influence invests life with enhanced dignity. While Bunyan lived he was but as a mustard-seed; now he is as a great cathedral tree, in which ten thousand voices are lifted up in laudatory and grateful song! "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." No living man is complete. While your heart beats you are undergoing a process. Time will mellow you; age will tone your character. Do not urge society to give you

a verdict just now. Society is too heated and confused to pronounce upon you with the accuracy of deliberation and the dignity of repose. Death will befriend you. A most solemn and righteous estimation of character is often introduced by death. The green hillock in the yard of the dead is a judgment-seat which might appal an unjust judge. Your appeal, then, under all misapprehension and misrepresentation, must be to the new hours which Time has yet to strike from her bell, and which shall chime out many a reversal of condemnation, and many a fulfilment of expectation long deferred.

### 927. Prudence.

PRUDENCE (in its ordinary but most inadequate sense) has done very little for the world except to tease and hinder many of its masters and sovereigns; it would have kept back every mariner from the deep, and deterred every traveller from the desert—it would have put out the fires of science, and clipped the wings of poetry—it would have kept Abram at home, and found Moses a comfortable settlement in Egypt. Beware of imprudent prudence; it will lull you to sleep, and bring you to a nameless and worthless end.

### 928. God our Father.

CHILDREN of God! ye especially who are called to suffering and weakness and great unrest because of manifold defect, God offers you his Hand. Are you blind? He says, I will lead the blind. Are you full of care? He says, Let me carry your burden. Are you in sorrow? He says, Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee. Is there a very steep road before you at this moment—in business, in your family, in your responsibilities? He says, I will make waste mountains and hills, and the rough places shall be made plain. So you are not alone—not alone, for the Father is with you. He is with you as a Father, not to try your strength, but to increase it; not



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WILL those moral lunatics, who are so selfishly devoted to their own immediate interests, reflect how much they themselves were indebted to their forerunners? Do they sufficiently consider that they themselves were *not born into an unfurnished house*? Who built the temples, fabricated the machinery, patronized the discoveries, wrote the literature, which make up the world's great bulk? How came we into possession of riches so vast, so golden? Who opened the thousand fountains, whose living waters turn the very desert into a fruitful field? How such things tell of ancestry! How they bind us to the past! How they multiply our obligations! It clearly comes to this, that every man of us is *born deeply in debt*. Have we paid the poets that have sung to us? Have we paid the mechanicians who have shown us that knowledge is power? Have we paid the mariners who have found out a highway over the billows? Have we paid the authors who have turned our solitude into society? Every one of us is deeply in debt. The Past is our patient and gracious creditor, and our obligations can only be paid to the Future.

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and culture. Constantly in life we are seeing the conflict of opinions, and waiting for the expression of the highest, and when the highest has been ascertained, society settles down into contentment and rest. On the other hand, until the highest has been made known, men cannot be quite at ease; the vexed question is still beset with perilous possibilities, and no man is foolhardy enough to build upon it with confidence and satisfaction.

### 934. Spiritually Discerned.

A MAN who is not under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost has not the faculty whereby spiritual things are perceived. He is as a blind man in the midst of a summer landscape; he is as one who is deaf in the midst of melodies and harmonies loud as thunder, orderly as the utterances of the sea. They are nothing to him. He has not the faculty, he has not the life that sees these things, and lays hold upon them, and appropriates them, and reproduces them in positive and beneficent life. And this is the explanation of much of the distaste which men have for religious services and religious engagements.

### 935. The Conditions of Rest.

THERE are two conditions on either of which man may rest, on one of which only does God retire from His work. The first condition is completeness, the second is weariness. God finished His work and rested. He rested because the work was finished; we rest because our poor little strength is wasted, and we sigh for the lengthening shadow, and need to be recruited by sleep. God finishes His work, and then He rests, not as one who is weary, but as one who has completed his design. We shall rest one day in that higher sense; in the mean time we have left our column unfinished, we have left our book incomplete, we have hurried away from our engagements, they are all waiting for us to go back in an hour; we rest because of an exhaustion of our strength, but He who is yonder in the

heavens, throned above all heights, rests because His word is completeness—His efforts are perfection.

### 936. **Mystery of Daily Life.**

DAILY life has always been a problem to devout wisdom. Virtue has often been crushed out of the front rank. Vice has forced its way to pre-eminence. The praying man has often had to kneel upon the cold stones; the profane man has often walked upon velvet. These are the common-places of daily study upon the affairs of men.

### 937. **Ability of God.**

Is God all-mighty? Then do not fear for the stability of His works. We have no occasion to be afraid lest the sun should miss his way. What guarantee have we that the stars shall glitter in their places? Is it because we appoint our watchmen that they come to smile and shine upon us, pouring light into our dark hearts, and speaking hope into our despairing and gloomy souls? What guarantee have we that the summer is coming? God's word. "Seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." What guarantee have we? We have little pieces of paper on which we write our I O U, and we have bonds and covenants, and our strong rooms, in which we secretly and silently lock up our pieces of precious paper. You say about any disputed covenant, "It is in the bond, it is so nominated in the bond." The bond is all you have to rely upon. But we look for the continuance of these things, the keeping up of God's great temple, because God's word has been given, because God's sufficiency underlies, and encompasses, and gives stability to all His works.

### 938. **Look at Christ, not at Christians.**

THE preacher sits down, if you begin to look at him as an example and a model, and to base your reasonings upon

his character and spiritual attainments. The hoariest saint in the house goes home if he is to be dragged to the front, to be looked at as an exhibition of the advantages and the profitableness of religion. But we all concur in this: Look at the Son of God, God the Son, the one Teacher and the only Saviour; and we risk everything upon that look, if so be it be reverent, earnest, intelligent.

### 939. The Idea of God.

IT is statement, based upon the distinctest and gladdest experience of our own lives, and based also upon the very first principles of common sense. The finer and clearer our conceptions of the Divine idea, the nobler and stronger must be our intellectual bearing and capacity. When the very idea of God comes into the courses of man's thinking, the quality of his thought is changed; his outlook upon life widens and brightens; his tone is subdued into veneration, and his inquisitiveness is chastened into worship.

### 940. "The Diet of Worms."

THERE was a peculiar controversy or conversation in my garden the other day; it quite entertained me. There were, after those heavy rains, two worms that had struggled out of the earth, and found their way upon the wet green grass; and they began to talk in a very decided and mocking manner about myself. One, the elder and better-to-do of the two, said, "Eh, eh, eh! we have been told that this garden has an owner, or somebody that takes care of it, that nourishes the roots of things, and that altogether presides over the affair. Eh, eh, eh! I never saw him. If there is such an owner why doesn't he *show* himself more clearly; why doesn't he come to the front and let us see him, eh?" And the leaner one of the two said, "That is an unanswerable argument. I never saw him. There may be such a being, but I care nothing about him: only, if he is alive, why don't he *show* himself?" They quite wriggled in contemptuous triumph; yet all the while I was standing

there, looking at the poor creatures, and hearing them ! I could have set my foot upon them and crushed them ; but I did not. There is a way of wasting strength ; there is also a way of showing patience. But the worms could not *understand* my nature. I was standing there, and they knew me not ! What if it be so with ourselves in the greater questions ? And if out of this homely illustration we may get a far-off glimpse of the fact that we who are talking about God manifesting Himself, and asking Him to come to the front,—what if one day we are compelled to exclaim, “Lo ! God is here, and I knew it not ? This is the house of God ; this is the gate of heaven !” That, whilst we are discussing about God and calling His existence in question, He is listening to us. He could put the tip of His finger upon us and, destroy our life. He could touch our reason and wither our intellect. Yet He spares us. For judgment is His strange work, and mercy is His supreme delight.

#### 941. Salvation to the Uttermost.

LOOKING at the whole volume of inspired revelation ; looking at the person and ministry of God the Son ; looking at His sacrifice upon Calvary, and at the whole scope and bearing of His mediation ; having regard to the gracious proposition made by the Father of light to the children of darkness, that they would come to Him and reason their case, I say, If any man be damned, it is because he *will not* be saved !

#### 942. Prayer before Faith.

THE mother of Moses laid the ark in the flags by the river's brink. Ay, but before doing so she laid it on the heart of God ! She could not have laid it so courageously upon the Nile, if she had not first devoutly laid it upon the care and love of God. We are often surprised at the outward calmness of men who are called upon to do unpleasant and most trying deeds ; but had we seen them in secret, we should have known the moral preparation which they underwent

before coming out to be seen of men. Be right in the sanctuary, if you would be right in the market-place. Be steadfast in prayer, if you would be calm in affliction. Start your race from the throne of God itself, if you would run well, and win the prize.

#### 943. Terribleness of God.

IN pointing out the terribleness of God it is not intended to appeal to fear, but to support and encourage the most loving confidence in His government. I do not say, Be good, or God will crush you; that is not virtue; that is not liberty—it is vice put on its good behaviour—it is iniquity with a sword suspended over its head; it is not even negative goodness; it is mischief put *hors de combat*.

#### 944. The River—a Ready-made Grave.

WHOM you fear, *destroy*: that is a brief and easy creed, surely. This was turning the river to good account. It was a ready-made grave. Pharaoh did not charge the people to cut the sod, and lay the murdered children in the ground; the sight would have been unpleasant, the reminders would have been too numerous; he said, Throw the intruders into the river: there will be but a splash, a few bubbles on the surface, and the whole thing will be over! The river will carry no marks; will tell no stories; will sustain no tombstones; it will roll on as if its waters had never been divided by the hand of the murderer.

#### 945. Creation Independent of Man.

IT is very humiliating to meddlesome men—an exceedingly annoying thing—that there are parts of creation, parts of our own creation, out of which we are shut. How nice a thing it would be for some men of leisure, if they were called upon to improve the stars a little, and to call up the seasons one by one, and to say when it should rain, and when it should not rain, and when the east wind should

blow, and when the south-west wind should pour its blessing on the rejoicing landscape! God does not want us there at all. He seems to be able to do quite without us there, and it is wonderful how small a cage it is within which the vastest mind is enclosed, and what very little pieces of work God asks any man to do in the creation that is around him. He can dig a little, and plough a little, and he can throw in his seed; but he has no power to tell the sun when to come and when to go, and in what degree of heat to shine upon his little garden or his paltry field. But we work because God *is*. We have no fear of the stability of His works, and therefore we proceed from day to day in procuring our daily bread, and setting in operation all the forces that are needful for the cultivation alike of our bodily and mental life. This is very humbling in one of its aspects, because we have nothing whatever to do with all that is highest and grandest in the creation. We are to do the servant's work. Let me see; do not some persons advertise that they object to menial employment? Menial employment! Why, there is nothing but menial employment if we really knew it, and yet no employment is menial if it be accepted from God's hand, and wrought out according to the measure of His commandment, and the inspiration of His call.

#### **946. The World without God a Blunder.**

No God: then there is no final judgment by which the wrongs of centuries can be avenged; there is no heart brooding over us to which we can confide the story of our sorrow, or tell the anguish of our pain: the promise of a cloudless morning, and a graveless world, is the bitterest irony of human speech: the weak must die under the heel of the strong: human culture is but the carving of so much dead wood: poetry is but falsehood set to music: the shining heavens, in whose every star we have seen a welcoming light to something higher, whose every golden morning has been to us as the gate of glory, instead of being the beginning of a better universe, those shining heavens are but the



upper boundaries of a magnificent prison: and as for the mysteries of our own hearts, their hope, their pain, their struggles after something better, their dreams, their battles, "their fond desires, their longings after immortality," what are these, but the refinement of cruelty, and the very torture of hell! Set God again on the throne, and all that makes life worth having, even imaginatively, comes back again. Set God upon the throne, and all things take upon them a new, true, beautiful meaning; there is hope of judgment, and a certainty that right will eventually be done.

#### 947. The Beautiful and the Great Miraculous Conceptions.

"THE Holy Ghost has come upon, and the power of the Highest has overshadowed," all who have wrought upon the springs of civilization, and enriched the resources of human life: poem and picture, book and statue, that have touched the world's soul, and given it any hint that there was a portion of the universe beyond the narrow visual line, or a deeper life in itself than could be sustained by bread alone, have been, notwithstanding the apparent irreverence of the expression, miraculous conceptions, fruits of the Spirit's strife with the human mind.

#### 948. Mystery of the Great.

THE great must always be a mystery to the little; the arch must always be a mystery to the column; God must always be a mystery to His creatures. If I could *understand* all, I should *be* all. Only the whole can comprehend the whole; only *God* can understand *God*!

#### 949. The Healing Touch.

SEE the poor woman in the crowd, who has spent all her living on seeking health, and has spent that living in vain. She comes behind the Great Teacher, in the crowd secretly, saying, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole." She had tried every other resource,

gone to every other professed healer, had been filled with disappointment, and she was about to give up in despair; and in that critical hour of her experience, she touched the Saviour and was healed. It must be literally so with us. We shut every other book, turn from every other teacher, forsake every broken cistern and every shallow fountain, and come to God and say, "We find life nowhere else; can we find it in Thee, Thou Living One!" When a man is shut up to this course, pressed down to this point, and goes in quest of God in this spirit, he will return from his investigation filled with the grace and love of God, and made bright and joyous with the hope of the Gospel.

#### 950. **Silent Influence.**

TAKE history through and through, and it will be found that the men and women who have most devoutly and honestly feared God, have done most to defend and save the countries in which they lived. They have made little noise: they have got up no open-air demonstrations; they have done little or nothing in the banner or trumpet line, and have had no skill in getting up torch-light meetings; but their influence has silently penetrated the national life, and secured for the land the loving and mighty care of God. Where the spiritual life is profound and real, the social and political influence is correspondingly vital and beneficent.

#### 951. **A Right Way in Everything.**

THERE is a right way of appropriating the contents of a bird's nest, and there is a way that is equally wrong. So also there is a right way of chiding, and there is a chastisement which becomes mere malice. Morality goes down to every root and fibre of life. In offering a salutation, in opening a door, in uttering a wish, in writing a letter, in using titles of deference, in every possible exercise of human thought and power, the moral element is present.

**952. God a good Pay-master.**

THEY who serve God serve a good master. Was God indifferent to the character and claims of the midwives who bore practical testimony for Him in the time of a nation's trial? His eye was upon them for good, and His hand was stretched out day and night for their defence. They learned still more deeply that there was another king beside Pharaoh; and in the realization of His presence Pharaoh dwindled into a secondary power, whose breath was in his nostrils, and whose commands were the ebullitions of moral insanity. No honest man or woman can do a work for God without receiving a great reward. God made houses for the midwives! He will make houses for all who live in His fear. There are but few who have courage to set themselves against a king's commandment; but verily those who assert the authority of God as supreme shall be delivered from the cruelty of those who have no pity. There are times when nations are called upon to say, No, even to their sovereigns. Such times are not to be sought for with a pertinacious self-assertion, whose object is to make itself very conspicuous and important; but where they do occur, conscience is to assert itself with a dignity too calm to be impatient, and too righteous to be deceived.

**953. A Poser for Sceptics.**

*To whom shall I go?* Shall I go to you who have tempted me? Are you prepared to take the consequences of your advice? If a storm should come, will you shelter me? If a sword should be lifted, have you room for me behind your shield? When the day darkens around my soul, can you guarantee me light? You must show me some of your works, that I may have an idea of your strength. I will go round with you and see what you *have done*, and infer what you *can do*; and if you can make out a clear case, then I may give up the idea of God. What is your answer to the assaults of great natural forces? Let us begin there. You tell me that you have built great fort-

resses—high, broad, strong—of the best stone that can be quarried. I ask you, Is it not possible for a bolt of lightning to shiver them to their foundations in a moment? You point to the noble bridges you have made, and you say, "That is my way over rivers." I point you to the floods which tumble their proud arches into confusion, and turn your harvest-fields into a swamp. Where then are your sheltering-places, and where are the signs of your strength? You have told me to give up the idea of God, and I only ask you this plain common-sense question in return: If I accept your advice and give up the idea of God—to whom shall I go?

#### 954. The Two Grave-stones.

THERE are two grave-stones in yonder church-yard which occasion a good deal of remark. You will be pleased to hear something about them. The first is considered a marvel of art. The marble and the granite of which it is composed are the purest that can be found, and what can exceed the brilliance of their polish? Surely that stone is a magnificent mark to set above the resting-place of the most honoured head. Skilful, without doubt, was the cunning hand that carved the stone so exquisitely. The stone tells you that it is put up to commemorate the life of the best of mothers. It was erected by her son, who resides in the chief mansion in the vicinity. He is proud of the stone. He points it out to all his visitors, and receives in return their tributes of admiration. For nothing else is he known but for that stone. He has never written his name on the holy roll of charity. No poor family would miss him were he to have a similar stone put above his own head. Yet he enjoys a wonderful reputation for family affection, and in some quarters he is held up as a model for the imitation of wayward sons. The other stone is modest, but really good. There is not one line of pretence about it. It, too, was put up by filial piety to commemorate motherly excellence. You should hear how it is talked about by the man who owns the fine stone. He

says, "I am ashamed of such men! It is true enough that he was not very well off when his mother died, but look how he has got on since! Why, he must be worth some thousands a year. I wonder he is not ashamed of himself, to let that thing stand there—he should take it up and put another in its place. I don't know how men can do such mean things." And having so said he walks towards his own stone, and heaves a sigh that has meaning in it. And how about that other son? Thus! He never allows a poor woman to go from his door without help, because her presence reminds him of what his own mother used to be in the days of her poverty; and never does he give the help without saying in his heart, "Sacred to the memory of my dear mother." He never sees a poor woman go along the road but he looks after her and says, "Once my mother was very much like that, and for *her sake* I must do something for this poor creature." It is in this way that he sets up his grave-stones; in *this* way that he honours his mother. He says nothing about it. He writes epitaphs on hearts, not on stones; and though he is misjudged by man there is One who makes an imperishable record of his love—for the LORD looketh on the heart!

#### 955. History cannot be Written.

HISTORY can never be written. It can only be hinted at, and most dimly outlined, from the particular standpoint which the historian has chosen to occupy. It is only by courtesy that any man can be called an historian. Seldom do men so flatly contradict each other as upon points of fact. Incompleteness marks all narrations. No man can fully write even his own life. On reviewing the sheets which were to have told everything, the autobiographer is struck with their reticence and poverty. Two processes are synchronous in the act of writing, the process of the pen and the process of the mind; and because the mind sees the subject in all its magnitude and bearings, it considers itself rather than the reader, who approaches the question from an outside point. Men cannot print tones,

glances, sighs, or tears. The heart always suffers by being translated into speech. Readers bring their own methods of reading, and often the book which is essentially musical is dishonoured by a vitiated articulation.

#### 956. **Ancient Times.**

MODERN civilization can hardly understand how men could subsist in ancient times; yet the earth abideth for ever without appendix or supplement. What was wanting was the faculty of interpretation. Men saw the water, but could not interpret it into steam; they saw the lightning, but mistook it for an enemy; they saw the sun, but could not fully interpret all he signified by the eloquence of light. The human power of interpretation grows; yet after it has grown it often forgets both the process and the fact.

#### 957. **The Supreme Insignificance of Man.**

I HAD a great difficulty to contend with the other morning. It was intended, indeed, to be the most serious difficulty of my life. Two enemies of mine had conspired to shut me within my dwelling-place, so that I could not get out; and they did their work in the night time, and when I came out in the morning I found it quite finished. There was a barricade before my door; it was a beautiful barricade; it must have taken a great deal of construction; I admired the thing. In the centre of it were two great spiders—mine enemies—who in the night time contrived this wonderfully malicious scheme to shut me in. How could I get out? There it was. I just took a walking-stick, and with one or two aims, destroyed the web which was to have shut me in as with iron. And what is this but the feeblest illustration of the power of the Almighty! When we have set against Him our little reasonings, and have tried to put Him out of His own universe, and have endeavoured to show our own power on a scale of stupendous magnificence,—what if He need not lift His finger, if He need but to blow upon our fortresses and our mighty works, to turn us into confusion and bring us to shame!

**958. Imperceptible Change.**

WE are all undergoing imperceptible change. The alteration is not violent: it is silent, gradual, sure! Our strength wastes, but we see not the process of decay. Our blood cools, and we know it not, moment by moment. We get round from east to west, and are yet hardly conscious of a movement,—the shadow makes no noise as it announces the approach of eventide.

**959. Mediation.**

THROUGHOUT the whole scheme of the Divine government of the human family, we find the principle of *mediation*. God speaks to man through man: He did so throughout the history of the Old Testament, and He does so to-day in the Gospel of His Son. Undoubtedly this is most mysterious. To our imperfect understanding, it would seem that the direct personal revelation of His presence and glory would instantly secure the results which are so desirable, and yet so doubtful. It is here that Faith must lead, because Reason cannot see the advantages to ourselves as men, when employed as ministers of God to each other, to our intellectual progress and to our moral nature are obvious and inestimable.

**960. Fickleness of Popularity.**

MOSES was the statesman of Israel, yet see how he was treated when he came upon difficulties over which he had no personal control! It is so that we deal with our own patriots: they think for us, they scheme for us, they involve themselves in the most exhausting labour on our account; so long as they repeat our sentiments, and give effect to our wishes, we laud them and write their names upon the bright banner, but let them turn round and utter a conviction with which we cannot sympathize, or propose a scheme with which we are but ill-fitted to grapple, so comprehensive is its scope and so numerous its details,

and in a moment we will strike them in the face and trample their reputation in the dust. We do the same with our preachers. We want our preachers to be but echoes. So long as they will say from the pulpit the things which we have been saying with cuckoo-like regularity for many years, we call them excellent preachers, and pay them their paltry dole with as much enthusiasm as small natures can feel; but if they attempt to lead us into unwonted tracks, if they do but suggest in the most remote and delicate manner that possibly there are some truths which we have not yet mastered, the probability is we shall in an hour forget the pastoral solicitude and the ministerial zeal of years, and treat as enemies the men who have been our wisest and gentlest friends.

**961. Recollection becomes Inspiration.**

THE desert was to Christ a holy place, after the initial battle; the sight of the old footmarks inspired His depressed heart; the echoes of the victorious quotations became as voices of promise. In the first instance, He was led up of the Spirit to be tempted: often afterwards He was led up of the Spirit into the same wilderness to be comforted. So all through human life; recollection becomes inspiration, and Memory speaks to the soul like a prophet of the Lord.

**962. The Cross.**

MAN is never so near the Cross as when he is in the highest mood of love. To misanthropy, to all narrow-heartedness and self-worship, the Cross must be the sum of all horrors; they stand on different planes, they speak languages mutually unknown: but the Cross is the very next thing to love; there is but a step between them!

**963. Home.**

THERE is a spurious spirituality which overrides social bonds and human compacts, but Jesus Christ never gave



His sanction to such blasphemy. Without a home Himself, He yet guarded the home-life of the world: able to live alone, He yet upheld the sacredness of social institutions. He taught the whole law—the law of home, the law of society, the law of the Church.

#### 964. True Strength.

Who is the strong man? Is he the man who passes through society with the battle-axe of Richard Cœur de Lion? The child sees a man lift a great weight with his teeth, and at once he exclaims, What a *strong* man! Is the child right? He would have been right had he said, What a strong animal! Such poor power wastes itself day by day; the man's teeth perish, where is the giant then? Here are two men under circumstances of equal provocation: the one man instantly resents the insult which has been inflicted upon him; in a moment he is in a paroxysm of rage, asserting his dignity, and smiting his opponent; men who are standing by admire the fire of his character, they say, What a *strong* man! The other man shows no sign of rage, holds himself in the severest self-control; instead of resisting evil, he answers not again, and persons who look only on the surface of things declare him a *coward*. Solomon would have declared him a strong man, and so would Jesus Christ. The strength of manhood is to be judged not by the fury of occasional explosions, but by the depth and solidity of moral foundations. The smallest natures are of course most easily excited to self-defence. Impudence is infinitely quicker than dignity. True strength is calm; incomplete power is fussy. "He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

#### 965. Never throw Mud.

Nothing is easier than to use bad names; but bad names are bad arguments. When your opponent is driven to personal abuse he is driven to his wit's end, and you may safely leave him. Never throw mud. You *MAY* miss your

mark, but you **MUST** have dirty hands. "This fellow" is no argument, it is scurrility—it is a faint spark of hell-fire; the man who would throw that would throw something deadlier if he could.

#### 966. Gloating over the Fall of a Good Man.

THE mighty men of the Church fall like stars from heaven. The great preacher becomes a debauchee. The trusted professor is caught in fraud. The feet of the strong are tripped up. And there are men who delight in telling these things in Gath and Askelon! There were cowardly men who could come and abuse the *dead body* of Saul, who dare not have met him in battle! Look at the jackdaws hopping round the dead eagle! See the hungry whelps opening their villainous mouths upon the dead lion! Is there anything more wicked than the joy felt when gloating over the fall of a good man? Some people do not wait for the actual fall: they cannot repress their delight when a good man *stumbles, even for a moment*. How eagerly do they report the slip! How sneeringly do they taunt the offender! "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault," etc.

#### 967. Communion with God.

WHEN Moses talked with God, his face shone; when *we* commune with Him, our *life* will be full of brightness. Divine fellowship may be kept *silent*, but it cannot be kept *secret*. Jesus Christ Himself went away from men to commune with God. If the *Master* required solitude, can the *servant* safely do without it?

"Not that I mean t' approve, or would enforce  
A superstitious and monastic course;  
But leisure, silence, and a mind released  
From anxious thoughts how wealth may be increased;  
How to secure in some propitious hour  
The point of interest, or the post of power.  
A soul serene, and equally retired  
From objects too much dreaded or desired;  
Safe from the clamours of perverse dispute,  
At least are friendly to the great pursuit."—COWPER.

**968. Clothing the Grass.**

"IF He so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith." Think of God clothing the *grass*, and forgetting the *child*! It is *impossible*. Let a lily detach itself from its root, and it must perish. So with man. Let him cut himself off from God, and he will become as a withered and driven leaf. The rod falls where the law is neglected. God does not engage to take care of lilies which have been plucked. Man has taken them into his own hands, let him renew their youth if he can!

**969. Disease in the Church.**

THERE is a disease in the Church for which I can find no appropriate name; it may, however, be described symptomatically. Persons who are afflicted with it seem to think that *religion consists in wishing for heaven*. They hold their heads so erectly as not to see the spiritual darkness, the moral lunacy, the social disintegration by which they are surrounded. They are dreamers, contemplatists, transcendentalists; but are they *Christians*? They are fond of hymns that warble the blessedness of heaven; they revel in texts that describe the rest, the pleasure, the music, the serenity, the fascinations of the celestial state. Let such diseased ones mark how the Apostle conjoins such words as "labour" and "gain," and how he balances what is "needful" for man with what would be pleasant to himself; and let them be rebuked and stimulated by the joy with which he anticipated restoration to the laborious life of the apostolate.

**970. The Difficulty of Getting Back.**

THE way of transgressors is hard. Smooth for a mile or two, and then hard, thorny—ravenous beasts there, serpents lurking here. It is very difficult to get back when you once

start upon that way. I have known young men who have said, "We want to go just a mile or two down this road, and then, when we find it becomes rather intricate, we intend to turn right round ; and then, after all, you will see that we have only been sowing a few wild oats, and just doing a few odd things, and by and by we shall settle down into solid men." I am not so sure about it. If a man goes into the evil way, and the great enemy of souls go after him, he will blot out his footprints. So when the man says, "I will now go back again, I can put my feet where I put them before," he looks for his footprints, but they have gone, and he cannot tell which is east, west, north, south ! Footprints gone, landmarks altered, the whole metamorphosed, and to him downward is upward. None so blind as he the eyes of whose soul have been put out.

#### 971. Free Agency of Man.

THE weakest man is greater than the most magnificent star ! God has made man greater than the heavens, though physically he dwindles into nothingness in presence of their vastness and glory. In what does his superiority consist ? In all that is implied in the term *will*. Man can say *No* to God. Physical government is an act of sovereignty, but moral control involves the consent of the life that is governed. The *house* cannot be shaken, but the *tenant* may spend his days in controversy and bitterness against the builder. Why cannot human life be as peaceful as the quiet heavens ? Because human life has a *will of its own*. God seeks by all the tender persuasiveness of His love, as shown in Jesus Christ, to bring that will into harmony with His own ;—when *that* is done, there will be a great calm.

#### 972. True Greatness.

THE child-spirit is true greatness. "Whoso abaseth himself shall be exalted." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "Pigmies are pigmies still, though perched on Alps, and pyramids are pyramids in

valet." A man may be great in *grace*. By the very necessity of the case all *outward* distinctions must become less and less, but *spiritual* attributes endure as long as the being of the soul.

### 973. The Young Reasoners.

THE young sometimes reason thus:—There is so much division in the Church—there are so many sects, parties, and divisions, that we have determined, therefore (O unhappy and illogical "therefore!"), to cast off religion altogether. Try this reasoning by analogy. Take it into the question of *architecture*, and the parallel would be this:—There are so many styles of building, and so many modifications and interpenetrations of those styles,—some houses are round, and some square; some Doric, and some Gothic,—that we are really so perplexed with the varieties, that we have renounced architecture altogether, and have resolved to reside day and night in the open air! Try it again in the matter of *clothing*, and run the analogy. Try it in the question of *patriotism*, and the endless shades of political party. Do men give up *business* because some tradesmen become insolvent? Do you give up housekeeping because some chimneys smoke?

### 974. Christ in Daily Life.

JESUS CHRIST knows about everything, knows about fishing, knows about shopkeeping, knows about banking, knows about all kinds of commerce. He knows your Stock Exchange better than you know it, and your Bank of England, and all your little mercantile concerns. It is an awful and insufferable calumny to say that religion is not business, and business is not religion. There is a great black line drawn by some hands between the two. It is wrong to do that. If I were going a fishing in the common literal sense of the term, let me have Christ with me. If I open a shop in one of these streets, let Christ always stand behind the counter with me, telling me which is the right

balance, and the right measure, and the right standard, teaching me how to keep my books, and how to conduct my commercial intercourse; and if I ascend to the highest place in political and social life, let Christ be with me and I will beat you every one if you do not take Him.

#### **975. The Cross the Only Way to the Crown.**

IF you do not know what it is to bear a cross, you do not know what life is. Some of us have gathered strength, and the fruit that has healed was from the Tree of the Cross. Yes, there has been a putting forth of branches even in the Cross, and a putting forth of leaf and blossom. Often the pains of the cross, our bitterness, have been turned into comfort. Our trials have made us what we are, and our pierced hands and our bleeding feet, our agonizing pains, have been the secrets, under God's grace and the ministry of God's Spirit, of every element of strength, and every touch of grace which has characterized our life.

#### **976. Self-reliance.**

MEN can be trained to strength only by being thrown on their own resources in certain determining crises. The parent acts upon this doctrine when he sends his son to a distant school, that he may be thrown into contact with rivals, and strengthened by daily contest with eager competitors. There is an educational element in opposition, in suffering, and in provocation, and it is for very love of his child that the parent withdraws the comforts of home, and places him in circumstances which will test his nerve and rouse his soul. The lad carries with him all the mingled comfort and pain of home associations, upon which his heart will draw when the stress of events is heavy upon him; in their very absence his parents will be present to him with intenser reality than ever, and the hiding of their face will bring with it a deeper disclosure of their heart.

**977. Activity the Condition of Strength.**

ACTIVITY multiplies power. He who would be strong must use his strength. He who would have much must give much. He who would enrich himself must seem to undergo a process of impoverishment. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die!" We must understand this law of putting things out from us, losing sight of them for a time, that they—working in harmony with the Divine law and administration of things—may come back to us more golden, more precious, than when we parted with them.

**978. How to Serve Men.**

GREAT philanthropic programmes must begin at Bethlehem, and comprehend the mysteries of Golgotha, if ever they would ascend from Bethany into the heavens. He who would make life a redemptive mission must go to the very base of society, and begin his work there. Men invariably fail when they begin at the high twig rather than the buried root. To serve man, Christ became man. So in serving others we must identify ourselves with them. Christ was in the darkness, but the darkness was not in Him.

**979. A Place for All.**

ARE the rich and the mighty and the noble always called to do the chief work in society? Has not God sometimes gone forth that He might call the gatherer of sycamore fruit to do His work in Israel, that he might call Elisha from the plough to speak the messages of His wisdom and love, and that He might call great men from lowliest and obscurest positions to do some great work for Him? Thus society is equalized. One man is born to great social position, he is called to great figure in the world; he rules and sways. Another, born in poverty and obscurity, is called to discover, to enter upon great projects, to develop sublime

schemes. Thus God equalizes one aristocracy with another, and daily teaches us that no man is to be despised; that in the meanest of His creatures He can set up His temple, if He will!

### 980. Equality of Human Life.

THERE is not only a distribution of talents, but there is a distribution of pains and enjoyments proportioned to our lot in life. So that things are more level and more equal than from some points of view they may appear to be. We speak of the inequalities of life; we murmur because we are not all upon an equal line. When all things are measured and summed up, it will be found that there is more equality of life, more equality of enjoyment and of suffering, than in some of our superficial moments we have supposed to exist.

### 981. The Future.

IT is to be noted that in all Christ's teaching there are manifold references to the future. Many a statement was like a sealed letter, not to be broken but by time. The life which Christ sketched was often an ideal life—beginning in a grain of mustard-seed, ending in a great tree. Again and again he hints at what shall be, and from the dim "hereafter" draws motives for immediate direction. Does not the parent help his child over to-day by talking of to-morrow. It is not upon a near future that Christ dwells, but upon the most distant ranges of terrestrial experience, as a father often tells his son what he shall have when he is a man. With much detail Christ outlined the final assize which He would hold upon "all nations," and from the very evening of the world drew considerations for the government of its morning hours. He thus established a practical relation between the events of all time, uniting human history by stretching the cable of a common Judgment from shore to shore. This was enough, meanwhile. He could not, considering the moral



infancy of the disciples, describe every line of latitude and longitude, though each was present to His own mind; but He fixed their eye upon a distant and most conspicuous object, nothing less than Himself enthroned in His glory and encircled by His angels, and bade them strike their course over the unknown but not ungoverned waters, so that they might eventually reach it.

982. **All Equal at the Cross.**

HERE is a region where money is not known—he that hath no money, come! The rich and the poor alike bring nothing to the Cross. We have to bring our sinful hearts, our wasted lives, and to throw ourselves upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. No bribe must be in the hand, no reference must be made to possibilities of future merit; nothing is wanted but a full surrender to the humbling and saving power of the Cross. The rich man must throw off the glittering encasement of his riches, and come with empty heart and hand to the Saviour. The poor man must make no merit of his poverty, but come simply as a sinner, in whom there is no power of self-redemption, and ask Jesus Christ to receive him as a ruined and helpless offender.

983. **“To Die is Gain.”**

“To die is *gain*.” The eye of true life can see clear through the dispensation of dying, and behold the “gain;” can see straight through the troubled night of the final act of man upon earth, and gladden itself with the sight of the morning glory that falls for ever on the hills of heaven. To die is *mystery*; to die is *speculation*; to die is life’s most desperate *venture*; to die is life’s *annihilation*; this is the creed of those whose life is not centred in Christ.

984. **Talent-burying.**

THE ground which received the one talent would also have received the five. There is room enough on earth to find

graves for the finest abilities and the noblest powers. Every man can be his own sexton. You can easily find spades enough to dig a grave for your talents and abilities, your money and your time, and all the forces of your life. But understand that in burying your talent, you are burying yourself; in burying aught that God has given, you are burying part of your very life.

### 985. The Condition of Spiritual Interpretation.

WE know what it is to be so far in sympathy with the spirit of a companion as to be able to pronounce an opinion about any of his reputed actions; instantly we say such a charge or statement is true or false; so entire is our mutual accord, that judgment of him is like judgment of our own heart. Our companion, if of a strong character, has put his spirit into us, and instinctively we have come to know whether any report of him is likely to be true or untrue; we know so well his magnanimity that we resent the imputation of any ignoble deed which rumour may connect with his name, or accept with thankfulness any report which details his excellence—in this case our spirit witnesses with the spirit of the report that it is true. In a modified degree this represents the relation of Christians to Christ; that relation is so intimate, so vital indeed, nothing less than consubstantiality having been effected by eating his flesh and drinking his blood, that they can unhesitatingly determine the truth or untruth of any proposition concerning him, and infallibly distinguish between a legitimate expansion of his doctrines and a distortion of them.

### 986. Polemic Theology.

THERE is a truth on every side of polemic theology; and just as men of every clime and race are necessary to make up the entire of God's idea of humanity, so every degree of truth, and every aspect of truth, must be brought together, if we would see the totality of God's doctrine. One nation

has caught its poetry, another its logic ; one has condensed it into maxims, another has elaborated it into most complex philosophies ; no two of them are agreed as to nomenclature ; still the doctrine, like its author, is One, though now it is as steady as a star, and anon it heaves like the billows of the sea.

#### 987. God Over-riding Man's Notions.

God is constantly, in all the processes of our daily life, upsetting our notions ; this we do not like, and it takes a great deal of hard and terrible drill to bring a man to this point, viz. " God is King, let Him do what seemeth good in His sight." It would appear that God will not have our calculations. It would appear as if He took special delight in proving our calculations to be mistakes. So we can never get on two days at a time. We say, " To-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant, and the third day we shall go into this and yonder city " ; and God says, " No, I will break your days in two, and where you expect prosperity you shall find a grave." So God won't have our long-headed calculations, and He will not have our deluded predictions as to this event and that.

#### 988. " Desolate."

No man can explain the meaning of that word *desolate*, as used by Jesus Christ. Different words have different meanings, according to the position, the education, and the character of speakers. When you say desolate, you may mean uncomfortableness, a sense of loss and of want. When Jesus Christ says " desolate," no wind that ever roared could speak it as He spoke it ; no desert that ever withered could represent it as He meant it to be seen and felt by the heart. When Jesus Christ says, " Your house is left unto you desolate," I cannot describe what He meant by that word. It was no longer a home ; it was no longer a place of safety, or a place of comfort, or a place of rest. When He said " desolate," I may not tell what He meant.

God grant that we may never know! It must be something indescribably awful when the face that has love in it and life and heaven is turned away! It is never turned away suddenly. It is turned away gradually, little by little, almost imperceptibly, until the moment does come when it is turned utterly away, and then language fails to describe the blank, or properly set forth the dire desolation of the scene.

### 989. Hereditary Depravity.

TELL the tree in April that it is bare and ungainly in appearance; very barren and naked altogether. The tree says, "Nay; I am rooted in the earth; my branches are strong; I live in the light; I drink the dew; and I am beautiful; the winds rock me, and many a bird twitters on my boughs." This is its April creed. Go to the same tree after it has had a summer's experience; it has felt the quickening penetration of the solar fire, quenched its thirst in summer showers, felt the sap circulating through its veins; the leaves have come out on branch and twig, the blossoms have blushed and bloomed through long days of light; fruit has been formed and mellowed into maturity. Now hear the tree: "I am not what I was in April; my very identity seems to be changed; when men called me bare and rugged, I did not believe them a few months ago; now I see what they meant—their verdict was sound; I thought the April light very beautiful, but it is nothing to the blazing splendour of the later months; I like the twitter of the spring birds, but it is poor compared with the song of those that came in June: I feel as if I had been born again." The parable is broad enough to cover this bewildering, and at times horrifying, doctrine of hereditary depravity. Men cannot be in April what they will be in September. Each year says to growing hearts, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." In old age men may accept the rejected doctrines of their youth. Experience brings us round many a rugged

hill, and gives us better views of condemned, because misunderstood, opinions.

#### 990. *The World's Saviour.*

MEN are valuable to us as teachers in proportion as they represent a great compass of history. When the aroma of all lands floats from their robes, and the accents of all languages blend in their speech, they have a right to speak with authority. The world's Saviour must have come through the world's great throng of hearts; He had come through Moses, the minstrels, the prophets, and on His way He now takes up this transient dispensation of the "voice."

#### 991. *Many Talents, Many Troubles.*

Is it an easy thing to hold many talents? It is the most difficult of all things. We say of some men, who may appear to us to be gifted with many advantages and to have almost the honour of genius resting upon them, "What a beautiful and sunny life must theirs be! what enjoyments are open to them that are not available to us! Did we possess their advantages, and stand upon their eminences, our life would be lighted with sunshine, and there should be in us no darkness, nor pain, nor sorrow." In so talking we know not what we say. The man who has most talents, and realizes that fact most clearly, and responds to its claims most honestly, is the man who knows the meaning of the sharpest pain, who carries daily a crushing burden; and in proportion to his sensibility is he exposed to manifold suffering, to much self-examination, and it may be self-torture.

#### 992. *Life more Abundantly.*

AN English Arab is taken off the streets by a Christian philanthropist, and placed under religious instruction; he is taught, for the time, something of his nature and something of his destiny; according to his capacity the instruction is continued to him; by and by he comes to feel that

in some little degree he is human, that he has wonderful powers, that he may *be* good and *do* good : so far the philanthropist has given him "life" ;—still the culture proceeds, ideas take a wider range ; the philanthropist conducts him from point to point in the circumference of knowledge, hoping to find the point most adapted to the youth's capability. At length it is found, and the quondam Arab becomes an explorer, or scientific student, or a man of letters, and so has not only "life," but "life more abundantly."

### 993. Goodness.

GOODNESS is a perpetual quantity, all penetrating, all searching, impartial, noble, a comfort in distress, a refuge to the weak, a tower and a defence to all men who wish to be right and to do right.

### 994. Studying Human Nature.

IN discoursing upon rhetoric, Socrates wisely touches upon this subject of human nature. He tells Phædrus that, "since the power of speech is that of leading the soul, it is necessary that he who means to be an orator should know how many kinds of soul there are." And again he says—"Unless a man has reckoned up the different natures of those who will have to hear him, and is able to divide things themselves into species, and to comprehend the several particulars under one general idea, he will never be skilled in the art of speaking so far as it is possible for a man to be so ;" a most marvellous illustration of the power of him who spake as never man spake, who needed not that any should testify of men, for he knew what was in man. He varied the prescription according to the diagnosis. To one man he said, "Sell all thou hast ;" to another, "Ye must be born again ;" to a third, "Keep the two commandments of the law : " He took the wise in their own craftiness, and upon the vision of the dreamer he opened such glories as had never shone from the artificial heavens of the poets.

### 995. "Not Altogether Bad."

WE say of some men: "They are not altogether bad; every now and then they come pretty right; so much so that it is hard to distinguish between them and Christians." It is as much as if we should say of a clock that is not going: "Really that clock is not so bad after all; every now and then, twice in every twenty-four hours, it is perfectly right; it may be right all day by and by." No; not until the mechanism is put in order, and the pendulum is started. So with man: the *heart* must be right before the life can be true.

### 996. Step Down to Your Inferiors.

SOMETIMES I have had this question put to me by leaders of choirs, by preachers of the word, by leaders of various kinds: "Are we to go down to the people, or are the people to come up to us?" And there is really a great deal of plausibility in that inquiry. It is one of those questions that take people off their guard; it sounds uncommonly well. "Am I," says the preacher, "to go down to the people who cannot understand these long words and strange sentences, or are they to come up to me?" Do you ask that question seriously? I have an answer. For God's sake go down to them. Come up to you! Who are you? Eh? Come up to *you*! That is a misreading, is it not? You did not mean up to *you*. When the singing man who likes classical music says, "Am I to go down to the congregation, or is the congregation to come up to me?" I say, "My dear sir, for God's sake go down to the congregation." Here is a mother who looks over the side of the cradle upon the little child and says, "Am I to come down to you or are you to come up to me?" Here is a schoolmaster who looks at a little fellow about two-feet-and-a-half high, who does not know one letter from another, and says, "Am I to come down to you, or are you to come up to me, you little wretch?" I say, "For God's sake, for

Christ's sake, for the sake of the Cross, go down!" "Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of the servant." "He that abaseth himself shall be exalted."

#### 997. *Ministers v. Barristers.*

It has been complained that the minister does not often compare favourably with the barrister; the appeals of the former are said to be inferior to those of the latter, and the effect is considered to suffer proportionately. Without going into the argument which might be justly founded upon the difference of subjects which engage the attention of the respective speakers, it may be enough to refer to two or three points which destroy the tenableness of the analogy. Are our hearers bound upon oath to listen to us and to give their verdict before leaving the church? Set a barrister to expound an Act of Parliament 1800 years old; let him address the jury upon it twice every week in the year; let each juror pay five shillings a quarter for a seat in the jury box; let the barrister call upon the jury for a monthly subscription to enable other barristers to expound the same Act of Parliament to other juries; when the court room falls out of repair, let the jury be called upon to pay for its restoration; and when the barrister has thus put himself upon outside equality with the minister, let him have five 'years' work, then five more, let him double the ten and add five, and then we shall see how he compares for freshness, variety, and power, with a painstaking minister of Jesus Christ.

#### 998. *Occupy your Right Place.*

ONE can imagine how inconvenient it would be in the event of a great cathedral clock wearing out, for a neat Geneva watch to put itself forward as a candidate for the vacancy. The Geneva might be a beautiful little thing, and might



keep the most exact time, and might be called endearing names by the ladies and little children; yet, to speak the language of charity, it might hardly be adapted to be set a hundred and fifty feet above the ground, in a circular vacancy at least ten feet in diameter. In such a case its elevation would become its obscurity. On the other hand, it would be quite inconvenient if a great cathedral clock, weary of city work, should be asked to be carried about as a private time-keeper. There is a moral in the figure. That moral points toward the law of proportion and adaptation. One can imagine the petted Geneva looking up from a lady's hand, and calling the cathedral clock a great, coarse thing, with a loud and vulgar voice, which indicated the most offensive presumption; and we can imagine the cathedral clock looking down, with somewhat of disdain, upon the little time-keeping toy. O that some sensible chronometer would say to the rivals,—“Cease your contention; you are both useful in your places.” One as a private chaplain, the other as a city orator, may tell the world to redeem its flying time.

### 999. Timidity of Young Speakers.

MANY a boy who has gone down to the river to bathe for the first time, has said how he would do it; how he would take a leap from that point, and go right in at once, and “would not feel it like;” and when he got down—well, he thought he would not do so just then, but by and by he would do it. So he went through the whole process of shivering, and shuddering, and trembling, and making a fool of himself, which people do when they ought to do boldly what they do timidly. And so the young man with a good Christian vow in his heart feels something come into his throat just when he begins to speak, or when he is about to begin to speak he forgets just what the first word was that he was going to say, and he says to himself, “Now, if I make a bungle there, I know I shall make nothing of it. I think I shall wait for a more convenient season.” What is he doing? I hardly like to say it, lest

it should fall like a blight on some young beautiful flower that much needs the sunshine; yet, as a matter of truth, I must say it, you are grieving the Spirit, and in that proportion are quenching the Holy Ghost. Don't stifle Divine convictions; don't silence Divine voices that are pleading with your heart for public utterance.

### 1000. The Bible—a Perennial Fount.

THE Bible can never be exhausted. The most learned commentators and eloquent preachers have but crossed the threshold of the magnificent temple. As in Nature, so in Revelation: the materials of every steam-engine, telegraph, microscope, and other mechanical and scientific contrivances, have been lying for countless ages under the dust of the earth undisturbed, until a comparatively recent date. The lens by which is now revealed the glory of invisible worlds might have been appropriated to the same purpose in the days of Adam. The metal which our contemporaries have transformed into gigantic locomotives is not superior to that which was used in the eldest antiquity;—and the water which flowed in Eden might have been converted into steam as powerful as ever propelled a modern engine. But these wonders were unknown. Their development was the triumph of a later genius. And what yet may be fashioned out of the materials of nature, no sagacity can prognosticate. Our present conquests form the starting-points of more dazzling victories. So, in reference to Revelation: generations yet unborn will group around its pages, and gather from them more sublime and radiant truths, than those which have flashed on our intellect and cheered our heart,—from the harps of the Hebrew bards they will hear a more elevating melody than ever charmed our spirits,—and in the living words of the Divine Man perceive a depth, a grandeur, and a significance of which no conception can be formed. The ancient prophets have yet more to relate. Isaiah will reveal glories surpassing imagination, and Ezekiel unfold splendours which would overpower our visual

organs. Intellectual perception will be quickened so as to penetrate the clouds which intercept man's vision of the truth. No new Revelation, however, will be granted ; but from the present Bible will stream " a light above the brightness of the sun." Never need we fear an exhaustion of the truth. It is sempiternal as God, and perennial as the springs of immortality.

THE END.

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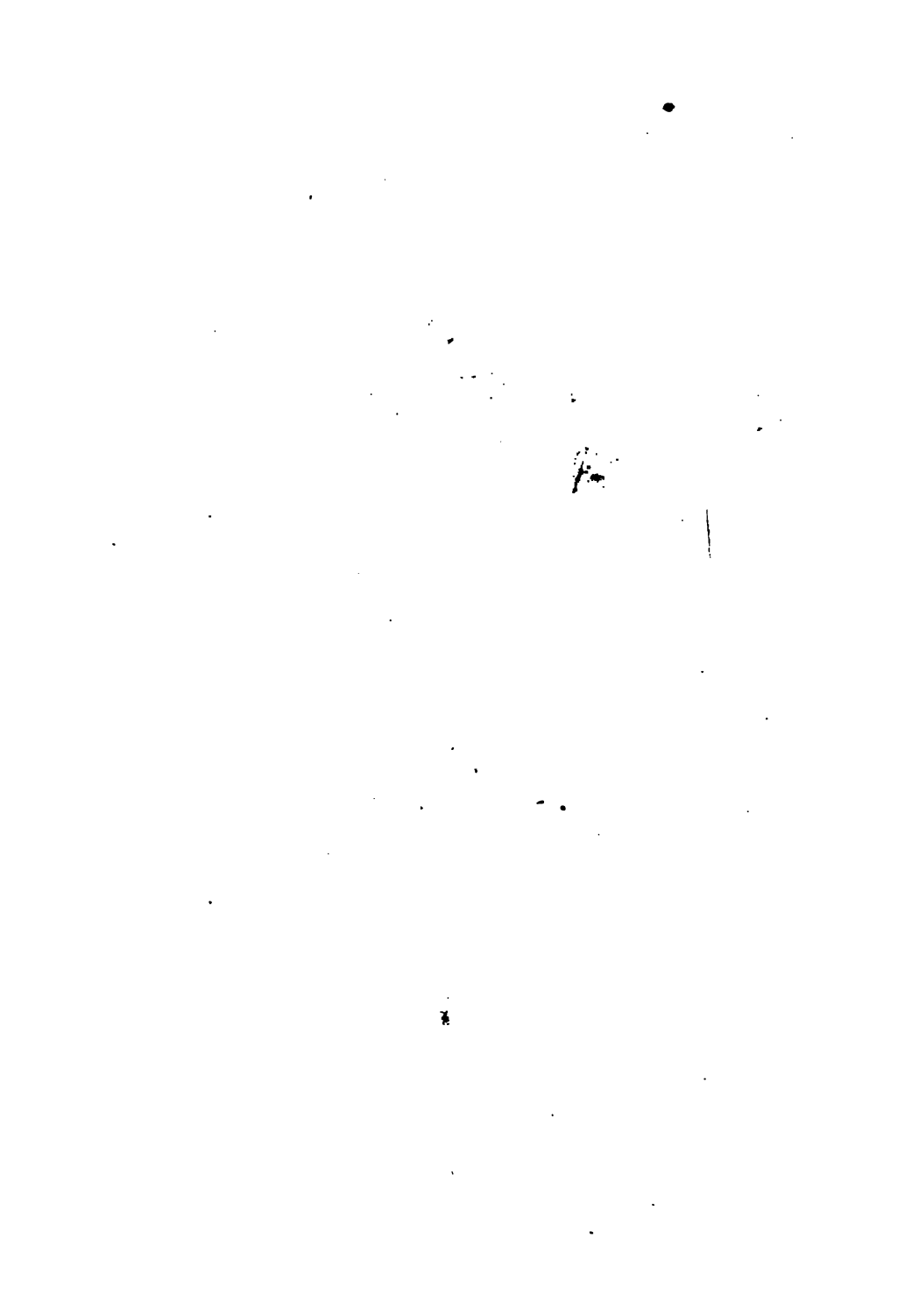
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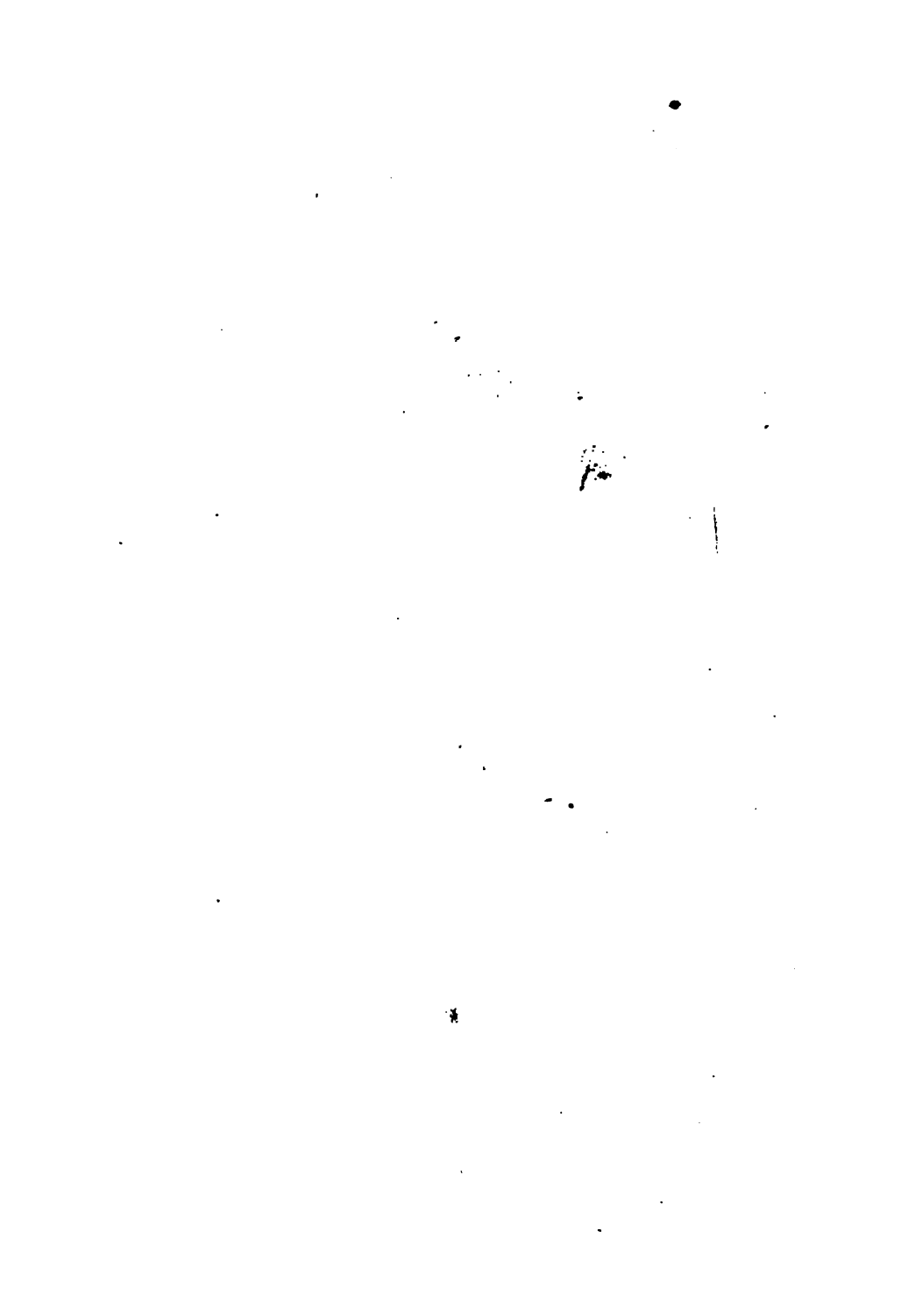
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